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ABSTRACT

A sample of 11 school boards in Ontario forms the data base for this study, which embraces several objectives: the identification and analysis of current policies, of strategies being employed or developed, of possible alternative policies and strategies, and of constraints faced by boards in coping with declining enrollment. The data reveal that most boards have found it necessary in facing decline to develop new policies or modify existing ones to provide an organizational basis for decisions on school accommodations, personnel, and programs. The report indicates that constraints are placed on school boards by the community and by the government and its ministry of education. Rather than attaching blame to the government, the author argues that attention should be given to the redefinition of educational goals within the context of limited resources. While the study does not provide a clear model to follow, possible strategies for adjusting to decline include reduction of the central office staff, elimination of families of schools to reduce supervisory personnel, shifting of coordinator and consultant functions to the school level, and radical restructuring of the school boards. (Author/WD)

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THE IMPACT OF DECLINING ENROLMENTS ON SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION IN ONTARIO

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APRIL, 1978

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This study reflects the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Commission or the Ministry of Education.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Declining enrolments impact all levels of school systems in Ontario -- from teachers, to noninstructional staff, to principals, to central office administrators, to trustees. The purpose of this report is to analyze the effects of declining enrolments on the governing and administrative structures of school jurisdictions in the Province. The study embraces four primary objectives: (1) to identify and analyze current policies that are in use by Ontario school boards that deal with administrative organization and structure in a period of declining enrolments; (2) to identify and analyze strategies employed, or being developed, by school boards that hold the possibility of a rational approach to the fact of decline as it impacts on administrative organization and structure; (3) to develop alternative policies and strategies that would assist boards in responding to the new context; and (4) to identify and examine issues relating to the demand for and the training of administrators in a period of retrenchment.

Several major themes have emerged from our study and are reflected in the chapters that follow. One such theme is the vulnerability of central office administrators and trustees to the fact of declining enrolments.

Articulate voices from the community demand to know why their schools must be closed, why the teaching force is to be reduced, why the educational program may have to be curtailed. Teachers, more professionalized and independent than ever, voice their fears and frustrations at the prospects of layoffs, larger classes, and reduced resources. The general economic turndown creates pressures on the government to reduce support. All of these factors impinge directly upon the governing structure of school districts, creating serious concerns about how to deal with educational problems on the part of administrators and trustees who have been conditioned to a long period of expansion in education in Ontario.

A second theme emerging from our discussions with trustees and administrators across the province is that, while we are in a situation of declining enrolments with all of its attendant problems, the basic educational issues remain; the fundamental educational responsibility is to ensure that the delivery of quality educational services to the children and youth of the province is maintained and improved. Many of the issues identified in the context of declining enrolments are concerns that existed during the period of expansion. While it is true that the approaches to these problems may vary in a period of decline, the essential fact is that the commitment and concerns are the same. Thus the intent of this report is not to identify new educational issues, but to discuss alternative approaches to policy and practice from the point of view of trustees and senior officials responsible for managing school systems whose student populations are shrinking.

Study Design and Procedures

Since the major method of inquiry for the study was a comprehensive, in-depth interview with trustees and senior officials, a limited number of school systems could be used as a data base. Consequently, a sample of eleven school boards from across the province was constructed. In selecting the sample systems, the following variables were taken into account: (1) size (according to student population); (2) statute status (Board of Education, Roman Catholic Separate School Board); (3) geographic location (embracing all regions designated by the Ministry of Education); and (4) language of instruction (including at least two boards in which French was widely used as a language of instruction).

Table 1 reports the student populations for the eleven school boards, along with other variable characteristics of the sample. The size criteria, which were differentiated for boards of education and Roman Catholic separate school boards, were based on the distribution of all systems for each statute status. For boards of education, systems with a student population over 20,000 were classified as "large," between 7,000 and 20,000 as "medium," and below 7,000 as "small." In the case of the Roman Catholic separate school boards, systems over 6,000 were classified as "large," between 2,000 and 6,000 as "medium," and below 2,000 as "small." Further, it was considered advisable to over-represent the large and medium boards of education, in view of the increasing complex nature of the governing and administrative structures of such boards.

The first phase of the study involved the construction of an instrument for the collection of data. A comprehensive Interview Guide (Appendix A) was developed by the investigators based on a review of the theoretical and

TABLE 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Board	Geographic Location	Size	Student Population†
Boards of Education			
Board #1	Central	Large	92,359
Board #2	Niagara	Large	34,124
Board #3	Eastern	Large	22,021
Board #4	Midwestern	Medium	18,963
Board #5¶	Ottawa Valley	Medium	16,401
Board #6	Midnorthern	Medium	15,787
Board #7	Northwestern	Small	3,695
Roman Catholic Separate School Boards			
Board #8	Niagara	Large	21,453
Board #9¶	Ottawa Valley	Large	19,329
Board #10	Western	Medium	5,703
Board #11	Northeastern	Small	1,511

†Enrolment for the school year 1977-78 provided by the responding boards.

¶French widely used as a language of instruction.

research literature. A pilot system was chosen, and the research team spent a day in that system, talking with the chairman of the school board, the director of education and other senior officials, and testing the research instrument and the methodology. Revisions to the instrument and the approach were made as a result of this effort.

The director of education in each of the eleven school systems in the sample was contacted and asked to participate in the study by granting an interview, following the preparation of responses to certain items of the Interview Guide, which was forwarded in advance. In addition, the director was asked to convene a group interview comprised of himself, the chairman of the school board, the senior business official, and any other officials he might wish to involve. One or two of the members of the research team then visited each school system, collected and discussed the prepared responses, conducted the interview with the director of education, followed by the interview with the director, the chairman of the board, the senior business official and other senior officials involved. The interviews were recorded on audiotape and were subsequently converted to complete transcriptions of the exchanges. These transcriptions, along with a collection of relevant policies and administrative guidelines and/or procedures from the eleven sample school systems, formed the data base for this study.

At this point in our report, we wish to acknowledge the willing and generous cooperation and support accorded the research team. Not one director of education hesitated to involve himself and his colleagues in the study. Obviously, without this ready collaboration on the part of our respondents, this study could not have been conducted. While we appreciate the numerous positive comments on the benefits deriving from the required data collection

to the system itself, we fully recognize that our information needs and, indeed, our presence in the system added considerably to an already heavy schedule of activities and responsibilities on the part of our interviewees.

Patterns of Declining Enrolment in the Sample

While elementary school enrolments have declined in each board in the study sample over the past five years, the severity of the changes has differed. Board #10 has lost only 2% of its 1972-73 elementary enrolment thus far, while Board #1 has already declined by some 22% during the same period. The majority of boards in the sample have elementary enrolments during the current school year that are at least 15% lower than the enrolment levels during the 1972-73 school year (see Tables 2 and 3). It should be noted that the French-language elementary enrolment in Board #9 has decreased some 35% while its English-language enrolment has declined only 17%. In the secondary panel, four of the seven public boards of education are still experiencing enrolment increases, while enrolments in the other three boards have begun to decline.

We collected information about projected enrolments over the next five years. Interestingly, none of the separate school boards in our sample had projections available, while all of the public boards did have. The projections reveal expectations that elementary school enrolments will continue to decline, although the extent of decline is expected to decrease. Only Board #1 expects continued decline up to 25% of its current elementary enrolment over the next five years (even though the current enrolment is down some 22% from the 1972 levels already). Most of the boards anticipate further decreases in the neighbourhood of 9% (see Table 4).

TABLE 2

EXTENT OF DECLINE IN ENROLMENT IN THE SAMPLE BOARDS OF EDUCATION, 1972-73 TO 1977-78

School Board	Elementary Enrolment			Secondary Enrolment†			Total Enrolment†		
	1972-73	1977-78	Percentage Change	1972-73	1977-78	Percentage Change	1972-73	1977-78	Percentage Change
Board #1	71,755	56,167	-22	34,414	36,192	+ 5	106,169	92,359	-13
Board #2	23,435	19,882	-15	15,126	14,242	- 6	38,561	34,124	-12
Board #3	14,703	12,728	-13	9,126	9,293	+ 2	23,829	22,021	- 8
Board #4	12,885	12,109	- 6	6,896	6,854	- 1	19,781	18,963	- 4
Board #5	8,445	7,072	-16	8,927	9,329	+ 5	17,372	16,401	- 6
Board #6	10,571	8,753	-17	6,858	7,034	+ 3	17,429	15,787	- 9
Board #7	2,570	2,028	-21	1,723	1,667	- 3	4,293	3,695	-14

†Includes enrolments for the Schools for the Trainable Retarded.

TABLE 3

EXTENT OF DECLINE IN ENROLMENT IN THE SAMPLE ROMAN CATHOLIC SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARDS, 1972-73 TO 1977-78

School Board	Enrolment		
	1972-73	1977-78	Percentage Change
Board #8	23,550	21,453	- 9
Board #9	26,272	19,329	-26[†]
Board #10	5,818	5,703	- 2[¶]
Board #11	1,854	1,511	-19

[†]Enrolment decline in French language schools: 35%; in English language schools: 17%.

[¶]Junior kindergarten and grades 9 and 10 were added in 1973.

TABLE 4

ENROLMENT PROJECTIONS IN SAMPLE BOARDS OF EDUCATION, 1977-78 TO 1982-83

School Board	Elementary Enrolment			Secondary Enrolment†			Total Enrolment†		
	Actual 1977-78	Projected 1982-83	Percentage Change	Actual 1977-78	Projected 1982-83	Percentage Change	Actual 1977-78	Projected 1982-83	Percentage Change
Board #1	56,167	41,860	-25	36,192	28,018	-23	92,359	69,878	-24
Board #2	19,882	17,003	-14	14,242	11,722	-18	34,124	28,725	-16
Board #3	12,728	12,430	- 2	9,293	7,410	-20	22,021	19,840	-10
Board #4	12,109	11,605	- 4	6,854	6,462	- 6	18,963	18,067	- 5
Board #5	7,072	6,463	- 9	9,329	7,195	-23	16,401	13,658	-17
Board #6	8,753	7,916	-10	7,034	5,846	-17	15,787	13,762	-13
Board #7	2,028	1,840	- 9	1,667	1,340	-20	3,695	3,180	-14

†Includes enrolments for the Schools for the Trainable Retarded.

Projections for secondary school enrolments in the seven public boards are similar to the actual declines already experienced in the elementary panel. That is, all the boards anticipate declining secondary enrolments, and all but one of them expect to lose at least 17% of their current enrolments by the 1982-83 school year. Total enrolments, then, are predicted to be down by an average of another 14% over the next five years. Declining enrolments, in short, are expected to continue for at least the next several years in both elementary and secondary panels.

Present and Anticipated Impacts of Declining Enrolment

In each board, the director of education was asked to judge the impact of declining enrolments on a variety of areas. The director was first requested to describe the perceived impact that had been felt up to the present time. Secondly, he was to repeat this procedure, giving the impact he anticipates over the next five years. Responses were classified into three categories: "little impact," "problem range," and "severe impact."

The examination of responses reveals a striking contrast between the severity of impact experienced thus far and that expected over the next five years (see Table 5). Currently, very few boards, according to the directors, have experienced severe impact in any of the thirteen areas of operation examined. Combining "problem range" and "severe impact" responses, the only area presently feeling strong impact in a majority of the eleven boards is that of school principal promotions. That is, it is already difficult to make promotions to the principalship. Some schools have been closed, others have been twinned, and mobility is affected. Directors in five of the eleven boards place three other areas in the problem range currently: school closings, support staff complement, and special education programs.

TABLE 5

PRESENT AND ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF DECLINE IN THE ELEVEN SAMPLE SCHOOL BOARDS

Area of Impact	Number of Boards Indicating:					
	Little Impact		Problem Range		Severe Impact	
	Current	Future	Current	Future	Current	Future
School Closing	6	2	5	9	-	-
Transportation	10	6	-	3	1	2
Formal Organization	9	5	2	3	-	3
Supervisory Officer Complement	8	4	3	7	-	-
Other Professional Staff Complement	7	1	4	7	-	3
Support Staff Complement	6	1	5	6	-	4
Teacher Redundancy	10	3	-	4	1	4
School Principal Redundancy	8	3	2	7	1	1
School Principal Transfers	9	4	1	7	1	-
School Principal Promotions	4	2	4	3	3	6
General Program Organization	8	2	3	5	-	4
French Language Programs	10	5	1	5	-	1
Special Education Programs	6	4	5	5	-	2

In direct contrast, declining enrolments over the next five years are expected to be at least in the problem range, if not in the range of severe impact, for a majority of the boards in all but one of the thirteen areas. That is, from six to ten directors anticipate fairly strong impact in terms of school closings, formal organization, supervisory officer complement, other professional staff complement, support staff complement, teacher redundancy, school principal redundancy, school principal transfers, school principal promotions, general program organization, French language programs, and special education programs.

The differences between perceptions of current and future impact may be accounted for by assuming that adjustments to date have not created serious problems. Perhaps there was some "fat" in the system. From this point on, however, the boards are expected to experience significant difficulties in adjusting to decline. The areas of accommodations, personnel, and program are all likely to be affected.

Organization of the Report

Following this introductory chapter, the report presents the study findings and discussion in four additional chapters. Chapter II, "Characteristics of Contemporary School Board Organization," provides the context for the later analysis and commentary by summarizing the current patterns of organization that emerge from the study of the eleven local school boards. Three general aspects of school board organization and structure are elaborated: the formal organization, the supervisory officer complement, and the formalized arrangements for facilitating the decisions to be made by the school board in discharging its mandate.

Chapter III, "Coping with Decline: Current Policies and Strategies," examines the policies and strategies currently in use by Ontario school boards that deal with administrative organization and structure in a period of decline. The chapter includes analysis of such issues as surplus space, school closings or other alternatives, teacher and principal redundancy, and general and special program organization.

Chapter IV, "Constraints Faced by Boards in Coping with Decline," discusses a number of factors that are paramount in hindering local school boards from successfully coping with the problems associated with declining enrolments. The first section examines constraints internal to the board and its community, ranging from the geography of the board to the attitudes and expectations of its residents. Constraints emanating from the government and its Ministry of Education are discussed in the second section. Such areas of concern include a number of problems related to current educational financing, programmatic expectations and guidelines, and legislation and regulations pertaining to teachers.

The final chapter, Chapter V, "Coping with Decline: Alternative Policies and Strategies," reviews a number of problem areas identified in previous chapters in terms of emerging patterns and proceeds to propose alternative policies and strategies in the following areas: patterns of organization and administration; local control, the board of education, and the community; school accommodation and closure; personnel and program; administrative skills and training; and the provincial government and the Ministry.

A Caveat

While we would be accused of tautological argument in declaring that the major problem facing public education today is not one of declining enrolments, but one of declining resources, the tautology could be neutralized by a shift in the present structure of educational finance in this province. It is fair, particularly in this period of decline, to ask if student enrolment should shape the cornerstone of school finance programs. Over the years, the provincial and local authorities have responded to perceived societal needs by translating them into educational objectives and a rich variety of educational programs and services. Now that we have fewer students to accommodate through these programs and services, do we contract the provision? Has the great variety of needs and interests dissipated with the declining numbers? We submit not. Surely the fundamental issue remains: what is it we want schools to do and how do we garner the resources necessary to the task?

Local school boards must deal with the effects of declining enrolments at first hand, but the responsibility is not theirs alone. The province bears constitutional responsibility for education, and with it comes the obligation to provide leadership initiatives and support to local systems. It is our hope that this report will inform policy development and practice at both levels. The discussion, analysis, and suggested alternatives are addressed both to the province and to the local school systems.

CHAPTER II

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL BOARD ORGANIZATION

On January 1, 1969 the traditional arrangement of school district boundaries in Ontario underwent a profound transformation. Slightly fewer than 1,500 school districts were replaced by approximately 125 jurisdictions. Only relatively few school authorities escaped the reorganization. In isolated regions and in several urban areas, for example, consolidation was not feasible or deemed necessary.

The landmark event precipitated years of intensive activity for school trustees and educational administrators. New relationships between the trustees and administrative personnel had to be forged. Simultaneously, they confronted the challenge of developing new organizations that would facilitate transformation of considerable investment of public funds into systematically delivered educational programs.

Opportunity had been scarcely taken to evaluate the effectiveness of their endeavours, when a new reality intruded. This new set of circumstances arises from the erosion of the base upon which claims for educational funding have been commonly predicated — the size of the youth population registered in primary and secondary schools. Simultaneously, local school boards have

discovered themselves in an intensified competition for an increasingly rationed supply of public funds. Appraisal of the efficacy of the relatively new local school board organizational structures has been rendered even more urgent by these developments.

This chapter's purpose, therefore, is to summarize the contemporary patterns of organization that emerge from a study of eleven local school boards. Attention focuses on three general aspects of their organization. These are the formal organization, the supervisory officer complement, and the formalized arrangements for facilitating the decisions to be made by the school board in discharging its mandate. These subjects are selected for their importance in the controversy that surrounds the expectation that school board administrative costs should diminish at a rate commensurate with the rate of decrease in student enrolment.

Each topic has relevance to a larger field of study in the domain of organization theory, political science, and organizational psychology. The overriding purpose of this report prohibits the lengthy analysis of each organizational facet that would be implied in a separate study of each. Instead, this chapter confines itself to description of information forthcoming from the small sample. The chapter is presented as an introduction to the analysis and commentary contained in the remainder of this report. It is presented as a summary for those whose comprehension of the mechanisms of school administration is not assisted by occasional media reports on outbursts at school board meetings or by the polemic that accompanies work stoppages by school board employees. For school trustees and administrators this chapter may seem superficial and trite. However, the issues arising from the phenomenon of organizational decline may well be decided by an audience that

is currently less familiar with the niceties of school board organization. The chapter is directed at this audience.

Administrative Organization

The formal organization chart of any enterprise, whether it be engaged in manufacturing, transport, the retail business, or public service, identifies the key positions occupied by the organization's members. Linkages are included to complete a diagram of the authority and responsibility relationships which ideally should bind the membership in their presumably coordinated pursuit of the organization's goals.

The most commonly portrayed image of the formal organization is that which is represented by a triangle. At its apex is located the ultimate authority. Ranked below this chief executive are usually echelons of supervisors who exercise authority over clusters of employees in the ranks below. Each incumbent to a position of authority is, in turn, responsible to a superior.

Notwithstanding attempts by several directors of education to create school board organizations that operate according to "organic principles," the formal arrangements characteristic of a hierarchical structure remain in evidence when lines of authority are emphasized. Only one school board in the sample exemplifies a deliberate attempt to effect a significant departure from the traditional bureaucratic model of organization. It is not the purpose of this chapter to assess the extent of the success of this particular venture.

The director of education is the chief executive officer of the school board. This individual is appointed by the board of elected school trustees.

The director is responsible to this policy-making group for the operation of the school organization, and this includes the actions of the administrators in the formal hierarchy. Invariably, the directors in the study sample also assume formal responsibility attached to the designation secretary of the board. As is the case with other formal positions in the school board's formal organization structure, the director's duties and responsibilities are chronicled in a job description. The following is an example drawn from the sample data.

> The Director of Education:
>
> a) is the Chief Executive Officer and Secretary of the Board,
>
> b) is responsible for the development and administration of all Board policies,
>
> c) keeps the Board informed of developments in the whole field of education, and makes recommendations that will promote the total programmes designed to meet the needs of the jurisdiction,
>
> d) reports to the Board on the effectiveness of policies and programmes,
>
> e) co-ordinates the activities of all departments and is responsible for their efficient operation,
>
> f) directs the preparation of the budget and is responsible for planning procedures,
>
> g) prescribes the duties and responsibilities of all employees under his jurisdiction.
>
> -- Policy Manual II-4

Although each of the school boards visited varies in the degree to which it systematically pursues performance appraisal programs, statements of goals and objectives frequently complement formal job descriptions for each designated position in the hierarchy.

Within the office of director of education in six of the school boards in the study's sample is a position variously labelled "executive assistant" or

"administrative assistant." The incumbent is responsible to the director and carries no line authority in the administrative hierarchy.

The appointment of assistant directors (or associate directors) who occupy the second level in the formal structure is a practice not commonly followed by school boards in Ontario. One director visited enjoys the administrative services of this type of deputy. Only three or four other boards in the province are conspicuous for this type of arrangement.

The other ten school boards in the sample rank superintendents at the second level in the hierarchy. In several instances incumbents carry the designation controller of finance, controller of business, or business administrator at this level. The smallest boards that employ the minimum number of supervisory officers allowable by regulation locate the superintendent of business at this level as the second official possessing supervisory officer's certification. Two school boards studied have this type of organization. Their formal organizational structure is, of necessity, relatively "flat" with school principals and other committee officials being elevated from the ranks for consultative purposes in the area of general administration.

Where the appointment of two or more superintendents is possible, a formal division of responsibility between business and academic superintendency occurs. Deployment of supervisory officers within these two general categories is not standard for the nine appropriate boards in the study. Much of the variation results from organizational strategies adopted for fulfillment of line functions which are distinct from staff operations.

With respect to the academic superintendency at least three arrangements are detectable in the sample. School Board #5 employs five academic superintendents who report directly to the chief executive officer. They are required to incorporate both line and staff responsibilities within the overall discharge of their responsibilities. An alternative scheme is exemplified in School Board #4. Of the five academic superintendents who report directly to the director of education, two possess staff responsibilities and three area superintendents are charged with general school operations in their respective regions of the county. From the sample of eleven, two boards follow the former practice and two opt for the latter. School Board #3 presents an intermediate arrangement whereby the curriculum portfolio is assigned to a staff superintendency, but the remaining academic superintendents must oversee operations that include instruction and evaluation as well as other staff-related matters that overlap with the business field.

The remaining four boards studied have organized academic superintendents in two ranks. The lower rank frequently carries the designation assistant superintendent or area superintendent. The lower echelon reports to superiors who combine line and staff functions. One board is organized in such a way that both levels carry superintendent designations. The line officials, however, occupy the lower rank and report to three superintendents who specialize in operations, program, and special services respectively.

A further variation is evidenced in the formal organization of a school board with a particularly large operational scale. Responsible immediately to the director of education are six superintendents who perform staff functions. Line operations are the primary task of assistant superintendents in particular areas of the jurisdiction. The assistant superintendents are

accountable to the director's deputy, who is ranked second in the formal hierarchy.

Also at the second level in all but one of the formal charts investigated in the study are the supervisory officers who pursue responsibility that is primarily business and financial in nature. With the notable exception of the two largest school boards, responsibility for overseeing the business operation devolves upon a single supervisory officer who is subordinate to the director. Within the two largest organizations this task is delegated by the director to two officials who separate the finance component from matters pertaining to plant operations. Regardless of the size of the boards in the sample, the business superintendency embraces duties that are manifold and complex. The ranking official must coordinate the endeavours of professional and non-professional staff who may be deployed across an extensive geographic area.

The Staff of Supervisory Officers

The extent to which school boards in Ontario demonstrate a capacity to cope with the changing circumstances associated with a declining student population will depend substantially upon the performance of supervisory officers. This study's primary purpose, however, was not to appraise the efficiency and competencies of this important cadre of officials. Instead, this chapter's purpose is to tally age, experience, and retirement factors. This demographic information should be taken into account in order to shed a clearer perspective on controversy surrounding the desirability and feasibility of curtailing the size of administrative staff complements. A related purpose of the study is to draw inferences with respect to training

needs of professional staff officers. As part of this undertaking information has been gathered with respect to qualifications and experience of central office administrators who currently possess supervisory officer certificates.

With a sample of only eleven school boards, the possibility of conducting extensive and precise statistical analysis is precluded. Nevertheless, the averages that have been computed in Table 6 supply an image of the age profile and professional experience of a small cohort of supervisory officers that indicates the complexities entailed in staff retrenchment. Moreover, the data which indicate the number of years yet to elapse before "normal" retirement of these administrators has relevance for considerations associated with motivational aspects of career prospects. The capsule information presented in Table 6 suggests the urgency of gathering similar data for all supervisory officers employed by school boards in Ontario. Such a more comprehensive study should differentiate between such designations as director, superintendent - academic, and superintendent - business. It should also reflect differences associated with geography, population dispersal, enrolment, and urban/rural location, as well as those factors which constitute the basis for this study's sample selection.

A more comprehensive study might reveal, for example, the accuracy of the sample statistic that indicates some discrepancy in the average ages of supervisory officers employed by public boards of education and Roman Catholic separate school boards. Is this apparent difference, as the sample suggests, mirrored not only in general education experience, but also in the supervisory officer experience that is documented for the respective groups? Furthermore, is the 3.66 years difference in the period that must elapse prior to normal retirement evidenced in the total population? If this is the case does this

TABLE 6

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SUPERVISORY OFFICER*

School Board	Supervisory Officers				Experience as a Supervisory Officer		Years to "90 Factor"	
	Number	Age	Experience in Education		Total	This Board	Years	(S.O.s)§
			Total	This Board				
Boards of Education								
Board #1	29	47.62	24.88	20.03	6.26	n/a	8.99	(27)†
Board #2	14	47.50	25.15	17.97	6.26	5.80	10.00	(12)
Board #3	9	47.78	19.33	11.00	7.93	5.71	9.57	(6)
Board #4	9	47.89	22.39	12.11	4.61	3.94	5.58	(5)
Board #5	6	49.00	28.67	19.00	10.93	8.83	7.67	(6)
Board #6	10	53.90	28.60	19.00	8.40	8.40	3.29	(7)¶
Board #7	2	46.00	18.00	6.50	5.50	4.50	7.00	(1)
Averages for Seven Boards of Education								
	(11)	(48.53)	(24.58)	(17.12)	(6.90)	(4.07)	(8.28)	(9)

TABLE 6 -- Continued

School Board	Supervisory Officers				Experience as a Supervisory Officer		Years to "90 Factor"	
	Number	Age	Experience in Education		Total	This Board	Years	(S.O.s) §
			Total	This Board				
Roman Catholic Separate School Boards								
Board #8	8	46.25	19.87	12.50	6.38	5.75	11.00	(6)
Board #9	9	46.44	25.00	14.66	6.89	5.89	10.86	(7)
Board #10	5	42.80	16.40	7.60	5.60	3.80	14.33	(3)
Board #11	2	43.50	16.50	6.50	5.50	3.50	15.00	(2)
Averages for Four RCSS Boards								
	(6)	(45.37)	(20.79)	(11.79)	(6.33)	(5.21)	(11.94)	(4)
Averages for the Five School Boards with the Smallest Enrolment (less than 16,500)								
	(5)	(49.05)	(24.36)	(14.72)	(8.00)	(6.88)	(7.47)	(4)
Averages for the Eleven Sample Boards								
	(9)	(47.78)	(23.68)	(15.85)	(6.76)	(5.93)	(9.09)	(7)

*Statistics are reported as mean values.

§Indicates the number used for computing the "90 Factor" average.

†Includes one official who has reached the "90 Factor."

¶Includes three officials who have reached the "90 Factor."

imply that separate school board organizations confront a qualitatively different problem in the areas of staff size reduction, motivation stemming from career prospects, as well as with respect to youthfulness/experience as a factor underlying administration's capacity to respond to contemporary challenges?

A larger study is also necessary for the purpose of ascertaining precisely the demographic characteristics for supervisory officers who administer school boards whose student population is less than 10,000. Only three such boards were included in this sample.

If the averages derived from this sample are substantiated by more extensive research, school boards must contemplate the impending decade of decline, while substantially under the guidance of officials whose experience in the classroom has been accumulated during approximately a quarter of a century of organizational growth. For the most part, this experience has accrued in the classrooms and offices of the board by which they are currently employed. For example, supervisory officers in the administration of the seven public boards of education report having earned 69.61% of their years of educational experience with their present employer. The statistic for separate school supervisory officers is 56.7%.

The relatively brief supervisory officer experience that is reported probably reflects the facts of reorganization that created larger units of school administration. Also, many supervisory officers were previously inspectors employed by the Ministry of Education. The study failed to generate unambiguous data on the number of supervisory officers who were previously inspectors of schools or who occupied other administrative positions prior to 1969. Respondents may have not recorded this as

supervisory officer experience. Not surprisingly, therefore, the sample data indicate that administrators have accumulated approximately 85 to 95% of their experience as supervisory officers with their present employing school board. This possibly misstates administrative facts.

One sample statistic that is revealing, but which requires verification by a more universal provincial study, is that which pertains to the average number of years that must elapse before normal retirement comes into effect. These data are important for several reasons. In the first place it has a bearing on the way in which each officer views his/her prospects for advancement. Secondly, it is a benchmark against which administrators calculate the amount of energy, enterprise, and commitment they are prepared to attach to execution of functions which they perform for the board. Thirdly, it may have a bearing on their receptiveness to retraining, transfers, leaves-of-absence, and other programs that are countenanced as strategies for accommodating to decline in the organization. Fifthly, such data are important for the task of gauging the feasibility of retrenchment programs predicated upon early retirement of administrators. The sixth important aspect is related to the latter. Not only will it impact on the career aspirations of those whose "90 Factor" calculations are averaged in Table 6, this information will also affect the motivation of those occupying junior ranks. The statistic which reveals for Roman Catholic separate school boards that incumbents require approximately twelve more years of experience to qualify for normal retirement benefits might be construed by those in the lower echelons as an indefinite elimination of promotion opportunity. This negative expectation would be predicated on the assumption, however, that supervisory officers will not favour the notion of abdicating their positions

of responsibility. Personal preferences, circumstances, and organizational initiatives may operate in the future to weaken this assumption.

The qualifications presented by directors of education and academic superintendents are essentially similar. An Ontario supervisory officer's certificate is a prerequisite for the incumbent. In addition to this credential, the overwhelming majority of supervisory officers contacted in the sample possess at least one undergraduate degree and a master's degree. The B.A. and/or B.Ed. as well as the M.Ed. are the university degrees most frequently reported. The completed doctorate is held by only 1% of the administrators. Complete statements of professional qualifications typically include inspector's certificate, principal's certificate, and certificates attesting to competency in areas such as special education. Generally, the officials represented in the sample possess professional qualifications that reflect the equivalent of approximately four to seven years of full-time post-secondary education.

The study did not directly probe the content of courses and training programmes for which the degrees and certificates were earned. Nevertheless, spontaneous comment by several supervisory officers indicates that their professional training is of limited value in helping them to comprehend the most advisable strategies to pursue in the face of substantial and imminent reduction in the size of the organizations which they administer. This dissatisfaction, however, is not the major factor that prevents them from seeking further professional growth opportunities. They express a keen interest in the prospect of further professional upgrading, although not necessarily in the form of doctoral study. For the most part, they are deterred by the relative career insecurity that surrounds leaves-of-absence,

by the remote prospect of receiving sabbatical leave, and by the perceived inappropriateness of existing graduate programmes. Several supervisory officers express interest in graduate work that capitalizes on the skills that they have already accumulated in the operation of school boards. The format of study that they experienced in their education at the master's degree level does not correspond to the preferences expressed by directors who are interested in further work at the doctoral level. Finally, almost invariably the supervisory officers are reluctant to invest two years in doctoral study at a time when retirement is less than ten years away.

Formalized Decision-Making Practices

The organization chart diagrams officially-designated positions and formal authority relationships between administrators, as well as other employees. On the other hand, it does not sufficiently delineate the regularized means by which decisions are formally legitimized within the organization. The decision-making procedures require scrutiny because of the importance they have assumed during the past decade during which previously asserted bureaucratic regulative prerogatives have been steadily eroded.

Currently, the senior administration of school boards is compelled to offer, at least, the appearance of the devolution of decision-making responsibility that, hitherto, was retained as a right of the school board and its senior officials. Whether or not participatory governance of education is now a reality or an illusion remains a moot point. The fact that must be seriously countenanced in any debate on the desirability of

supervisory officer retrenchment is that the form, if not the substance, of broad-based consultation in local educational governance places inordinate demands on the time resources of supervisory officers. The situation is exacerbated by the profound nature of decisions that the declining enrolment phenomenon is forcing upon each local jurisdiction.

An indication of the time commitment which prevailing decision-making processes elicit from supervisory officers is necessary for at least two reasons. In the first place, it offers some explanation for the apparent need for a stable, if not increasing administrative cadre, notwithstanding the shrinkage in the student population. The numbers may be fewer, but the governance of the enterprise may have increased in complexity. Consequently, a reduction in administrative complement that is commensurate with student population decrease may also suggest an imperative modification of preferences with respect to broad-based input on administrative problems. Secondly, the amount of time that supervisory officers are required to invest in decision making should be calculated for the purpose of computing the residual that can be assigned to focal tasks of improving the quality of educational programs and instructional practices.

The summation that follows provides a partial index of time investment only. It focuses on formal commitments to attend meetings that are regularly scheduled at the most senior policy-making and administrative levels, or for which provision is made in policy and regulation. The overview does not take account of a myriad of meetings that are scheduled in the normal course of each supervisory officer's working year and which have a bearing on the consultation process. Moreover, the chronicle of councils, committees, caucuses, etc., does not accurately reflect the amount of time consumed by

attention to preparation and follow-up to meetings that characteristically are lengthy and fatiguing. Finally, although the precis differentiates between functions at which the supervisory officers offer resource services and those at which they are the decision makers, the nature of the description is such as to discount recklessly the real need for administrators who can operate in the indeterminate zone where political factors overlap perceived administrative prerogatives in the decision-making arena.

Meetings at which School Trustees are Primary Participants

Meetings at which school trustees are primary participants are scheduled in the normal course of discharging the responsibility delegated to local boards by the provincial legislature. Clearly the school board exercises prerogatives at these meetings in the policy-setting domain. However, the school trustees who are elected for two-year terms and who, most commonly, must devote much of their working day to occupational interests rely heavily on advice and resources supplied at these meetings by supervisory officers.

The regular meeting of the school board is most familiar to constituents. The school authority is compelled to use this as the venue to conduct its business in public and to ratify its decisions therein. Debate is not confined, however, to public sessions. Different school boards rely to varying degrees on the privacy afforded by the in-camera sessions that usually are scheduled immediately following or prior to regular school board and committee meetings. Public and private sessions jointly consume considerable time.

Most commonly, these assemblies are scheduled for the evening. In the event that the trustees convene initially in committee-of-the-whole,

deliberations usually commence at 7:00 or 7:30 p.m. Administrators have little difficulty in recalling sessions that extend past midnight. Some school boards attempt to avoid this as common practice by requiring majority assent for proceedings to extend beyond 11:00 p.m. The committee system is also undertaken as a device for expediting the conduct of school board business.

The frequency with which regular meetings are scheduled varies depending upon the particular school board and the pressure of business in the summer months particularly. Two school boards in the sample convene once monthly on a regular basis. One other jurisdiction schedules its meetings at three-week intervals. The remaining eight in the sample meet twice in each month. One meeting may be cancelled in July and August. Special meetings of each school board may be called to discuss matters of pressing concern. Ratification of collective agreements and deliberation on stalled negotiations precipitate emergency sessions of this type.

Supervisory officers may be obliged to attend regular board meetings, or they may feel a sense of compulsion arising from the fact that the performance of their duties is affected by events that transpire in this arena. Meetings also offer venues for furthering individual interests in a variety of ways. They keep the official abreast of current and crucial information. They may also provide the incumbent with beneficial visibility.

Four boards in the study's sample report that two standing committees meet each month in addition to the regular board meeting. The characteristic division of responsibility for these committees is between matters concerning educational programs on the one hand, and those typically involving general management, finance, property, and buildings. Regular meetings of standing

committees are evidenced in large and small boards. Four other boards in the sample resort to the standing committee device, but the meetings are subject to the call of the chairperson.

The use of a chairman's committee is less frequently encountered. In one sample school board this committee exercises influence over the means by which items are delegated for discussion at regular board sessions or at committee meetings. Boards are divided with respect to the way standing committees and the regular school board assembly consider items of business. The sequence of referral and the ratification of committee decisions are two items of variance. The disposition of business in this complex interaction process demands considerable involvement by the director and the senior aides. The delicacy of the process and the serious ramifications of potential outcomes mandate that the director of education closely monitor as many of these meetings as is possible, even if he is not required to be in attendance. Senior superintendents do not lightly absent themselves from these proceedings either. At least one supervisory officer is assigned responsibility for the organizational tasks associated with each standing committee.

Proliferation of operating ad hoc committees places a further drain on the school board's administrative resources. Six boards identify the existence of between six and twenty such groups. Only one sample school board failed to record the existence of an operating ad hoc committee. As is the case with statutory committees, the frequency with which they meet in each year is not as great as for standing committees and the regular board meetings. On the other hand, items of pressing concern may arise that force intensive activity by ad hoc committees. For example, committees charged with responsibility for school closings, budget preparation, and salary negotiations, may reconvene for many lengthy meetings in the short space of one or two months.

The largest number of statutory committees formed by a board in the study's sample is four. On the average the sample group has two statutory committees. Recently, French Language Advisory Committees have been convened with considerable frequency to discuss business items that have profound consequences for local educational programs and staffing. The other statutory committees are less likely to be a considerable drain on the administration's resources.

Meetings at which Administrative Officials are Primary Participants

Meetings at which administrative officials are primary participants are arranged as an integral part of procedures designed to expedite the business of translating policy into action. These assemblies are required for purposes which are at time routine and, on other occasions far reaching in terms of recommendations that go forward for endorsement by school trustees. As is the case in the summation of regularly scheduled meetings of school board trustees, this chapter documents only the most conspicuous staff caucuses. It only hints at the extensive preparation and follow-up that is frequently required.

In discharging his responsibilities as chief executive officer the director necessarily confers with his aides on a daily basis in informal settings. In addition to these relatively fleeting contacts, arrangement is made for regular gatherings at which information is shared, reviews are conducted, and decisions for action are undertaken.

The most important of these meetings is an executive session that each director usually schedules on a weekly basis during normal office hours with senior supervisory officers. In the small boards where the only superintendent

is responsible for the business sector of operations, the director relies more heavily on the counsel of principals and professional support staff in these councils. In the largest boards the director may commence the week with a three-hour meeting with the senior superintendents and the ranking deputy. The superintendent of business may be excluded from this executive session and, instead, confer regularly with the director on a daily basis.

Where the staff of supervisory officers is sufficiently large, another meeting with a more general participation is scheduled at another time in the week. It may convene less frequently than the executive group and be chaired by one of the chief executive officer's superintendents. Membership in these gatherings frequently extends to principals.

The latter also meet regularly as a group with a supervisory officer from the superintendency ranks. Other contacts are maintained on a regular basis. This consultation may involve the director personally, or the task may be delegated to a representative assigned from the supervisory officer pool. Included as routine entries in the diaries of many of the directors, for example, are meetings with representatives of the teachers' federations' affiliates, executive members of school administrators' associations, and regional directors of education.

Outside this circuit of administrative councils, caucuses, and committees, the supervisory officers engage in a series of meetings that are inevitable adjuncts to the tasks entailed in administering a school board organization. Agendas and participants vary, but the pace of meetings at which attendance seems imperative rarely seems to abate.

Summary

The organization chart, the supervisory officer complement that is accommodated within its framework, and the venues that are arranged for expediting decisions associated with local educational governance have been identified as three important formal organizational factors in the eleven school boards incorporated in the study's sample. This summary is partial to the extent that it does not describe the characteristics and content of the administrative work undertaken within this formal infrastructure. That is to say, the formal arrangements described in this chapter are merely strategies that are regularized. Around this formal organization is a plethora of interaction that encompasses a wide range of formal and informal contacts with trustees, teachers, other school board employees, parents, and students. In addition there are exchanges with officials of such organizations as municipal governments, neighbouring school boards, teachers' federations, community action groups, home and school associations, the Ministry of Education and other province-wide educational associations.

These formal arrangements vary in detail from school board to school board for a variety of reasons. These were not probed in detail by the study. In some instances, however, the size of the jurisdiction and the dispersal of population centres therein require the services of extra supervisory officer complement in order to facilitate communication, control, and coordination. In other cases, the sheer size of the operation is such as to demand the services of experts who can cope with the logistics of organization. A third justification for staff complement size and supervisory officer complement is the perceived need for implementation of improved program and instruction.

Unfortunately, for those who must defend existing organizational structures, school boards experience difficulty in precisely stating their operational objectives. The problem is complicated by the fact that, notwithstanding an extensive literature on efforts to develop learning theory, the technology of education remains ambiguous. Consequently, defence of the status quo is couched in terms of workload demands on supervisory officers, more frequently than it relies on cost-benefit impact on the quality of educational program and effectiveness of instructional techniques.

The nature of the authority structure underlying local educational governance is yet another factor that confounds objective appraisal of the effectiveness of contemporary school board organization. Frequently, the tasks of administration which might be interpreted as relating directly to educational program and instruction are superseded by those which arise from a preoccupation with security and authority relationships. The definition and redefinition of administrative prerogatives as distinct from those of elected trustees becomes a matter of overriding concern where mutual commitment to specific operationalized objectives is elusive. Not only does this situation reduce administration to defence of its capacity to manage, it may generate timidity as a result of a fear of being called to account for intruding upon the policy-making rights of trustees. This creates a distraction from the core purpose of education and contributes to the burden of work entailed in the staging of meetings. These formal assemblies are too easily diverted from educational purposes into contests surrounding authority and control which become ends in themselves.

CHAPTER III

COPING WITH DECLINE: CURRENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Declining enrolments have affected or will affect most school systems in Ontario in various ways. As we have seen, the most common effects will be related to school accommodations, personnel, and program. As school boards adapt to these effects, the organizational structure and administrative operations must also change. This chapter examines the policies and strategies currently in use by Ontario school boards that deal with administrative organization and structure in a period of decline. In particular, we focus upon changes in board policies and administrative procedures that provide the criteria and mechanisms for decision making in the critical era. We first discuss the changes made in central office administrative staffing and in concomitant organizational structure and functioning. The issue of surplus space is addressed next, and policies and procedures for school closings or other alternatives are described. Policies and agreements that deal with teacher and principal redundancy are then examined. Finally, we discuss briefly the guidelines related to general program organization and to provision of special programs within the system.

In addition to providing a description of current approaches to these important areas of concern, the chapter sets the stage for the analysis, in Chapter IV, of problems that hinder boards in coping with decline and in making rational and educationally sound decisions. Together, these two chapters furnish factual and perceptual information by which to test the potential effectiveness and feasibility of the alternative policies and strategies suggested by the research team in Chapter V.

Changes in Administrative Organization and Staffing

When declining enrolments create situations of teacher cutbacks, the central office of the board concerned becomes vulnerable if their staffing does not also reflect some reduction in force. This pressure was well summarized by one director of education who explained,

> The board's case was well put. The teaching staff was saying, "You're cutting us back, but you're keeping that horde of drones up there." So we reduced our supervisory officer complement.

Another pressure for reductions and reorganization comes from parents and ratepayers who expect reductions in central office to parallel the rate of decline in school enrolments. Another director explained, "In 1977, the tax bills were enormous; everything exploded all of a sudden. And senior fat cats and bureaucratic operation are targets. The crunch is on now."

Table 7 depicts the reductions in supervisory officer complement that have been made by the boards in our sample since enrolments started to decline. The largest reduction has been in Board #3, where four supervisory positions have been lost over the past three years. Only the two largest boards anticipate further reductions over the next five years. In Board #1,

TABLE 7

REDUCTIONS IN SUPERVISORY OFFICER COMPLEMENT SINCE DECLINE IN ENROLMENT

School Board	Current Number of Supervisory Officer Positions	Number of Positions Lost Since Decline
Boards of Education		
Board #1	29	1
Board #2	14	3
Board #3	9	4
Board #4	9	2
Board #5	6	2
Board #6	10	1
Board #7	2	1
Roman Catholic Separate School Boards		
Board #8	8	0
Board #9	9	2
Board #10	5	0
Board #11	2	1

projections call for a 20% reduction in the supervisory officer complement (six positions). The other board anticipates a further reduction of two positions. Both the smallest public and separate boards (Boards #7 and #11) have the minimal number of these positions allowed by the Education Act (one director and one business administrator). Finally, two separate school boards (Boards #8 and #10) have no reductions either implemented or projected.

With few exceptions, the boards in our sample are experiencing pressure to reduce central office staff in all categories, from supervisory officials through professional staff to general support staff. The trend is viewed by most directors of education as a sign of the times -- declining enrolments, declining economy, and the like. Board officers become highly visible targets in such a milieu. The most telling summary of the average ratepayer reaction came from a director of education:

> There is always the sentiment among some that supervisory officers are overpaid and underworked; central office is the Taj Mahal. It's reared its head more and more these days as the taxpayer gets hit in the pocket.
>
> The whole concept of "administered hardships" is tough for people to take. They'll take God-given hardships like flood and famine. But administered ones? My taxes are administered hardships, and who administers them? Administrators. And who is the big administrator in this? The director of education. We've got to go after him.

In this climate, several of the boards have responded by reducing supervisory officer complements and other staff positions. Their reorganizations, then, were heavily influenced by declining enrolments. The reorganizations and reduction in force, however, have not always been made with confidence that the school system will not suffer. Trustees and officials alike spoke about the increased workload confronting board offices in a period of decline, and the workload was perceived to be compounded by a reduction in force. One

trustee summarized what many saw as a paradox: "There are enough experiences and studies in a lot of places that show that, as your enrolments decrease and as the numbers of school-level personnel decrease, there appears to be a need for increasing the central staff, crazy as it sounds."

The workload of the central office in general, and of supervisory officers in particular, is influenced by a number of factors. The factor most directly subject to significant influence by the officials themselves is the educational and organizational philosophy of the director and the board. This philosophical variable has to do with the role of supervisory officials in supervising operations within a school and in planning and coordinating educational functions. This variable is operative in the explanation given by one of the public board interviewees for their complement size: "The board has to have some influence in the classrooms and schools, and the way to have that and to ensure it is through the supervisory officials. The number we have is not that many when you consider the number of classrooms they are responsible for." A similar philosophy was held in one of the separate boards, although that philosophy is beginning to change. The following statement illustrates the transition in that board:

> The problem [in reducing supervisory positions] is one of a matter of style as well as of the way in which the organization operates . . . . There are some philosophical considerations on the table now that might change it. Part of the problem is the degree of supervision we feel the central office should exercise. I've felt it necessary for us to exercise a fairly high degree of supervision, and that's why we have the number of people in the academic sector directly relating to supervision. Sixty percent or more of their time is spent in actual school involvement.
>
> Quite a lot of changes have taken place in the system and in the educational enterprise in the last ten years . . . . We have a very young staff, young principals. I think it's [the supervisory role] still critical for a while, but we now are initiating a different approach to the evaluation and

> supervision of principals by central staff. A main thrust is to develop in them better skills in exercising direct supervision and direct responsibility for their own schools and staffs. So ultimately we can withdraw more and more our central office involvement in that. We have a five-year plan. If this works, it would help if we had to decrease the number of supervisory officers.

The board with a philosophy that differs greatly from that which emphasizes supervision, planning, and decision making by central office officials is that of Board #3. The board had thirteen supervisory officers at one time, but they now have only nine. It was explained that the board realized early that decline would hit, so they began to reduce the "fixed" cost of administration, and have reduced by four just in the past three years. They have cut administrative costs from 1.56% of the 1969 budget to .96% of the current budget. Their cuts were not made merely to adjust to decline, but rather to operationalize the director's philosophy of differentiating labor, of sharing decision making, and of involving people from across the system in specific, short-term tasks. The director views the role of the supervisory official as one of facilitating decision making, of being a broker of political forces, of being persuasive. As he describes it, "You're not running around putting bandaids on; you're not trying to communicate after the fact." It is telling, perhaps, that this director did not mention the role of officials in supervising schools and teachers. This lack of emphasis would not be acceptable in many Ontario boards.

Other factors that impinge on the workload of supervisory officials and their staffs are much less amenable to individual influence or control. These factors themselves are more heavily influenced by societal attitudes, by political climates, and even by governmental demands. Each of these factors, in turn, is changing in a period of decline.

Societal attitudes are often reflected in the desire for community participation in educational decision making. One of the directors interviewed commented that the demands on supervisory officials over the past ten years have increased enormously. As the emphasis in society shifted to involvement, demands for the time of supervisory officials escalated in the form of reports, committees, commissions, and responses to trustees and ratepayer requests. In a time of decline, this demand escalates even more. Consider the description by an interviewee from one of the large separate boards:

> With declining enrolments, a board has to readjust constantly. Every time you have to readjust, you have to initiate some kind of study, apart from all the committees and all the work that it requires. For example, the study that will be initiated on boundaries and zones -- that's a major job. As you readjust, you have to project, to stop and study, so this increases the workload . . . . We cannot decrease the administrative staff in the same proportion as we decrease the teaching staff because we need more services.

Discussions in several boards highlighted the impact of the community involvement principle on administrative workload. Most directors agreed that there is much more administrative detail in today's climate -- meetings, surveys, and interaction with a myriad of individuals and groups with some interest to push. School board operation reflects this change in attitude; numerous ad hoc committees are struck to deal with a variety of issues. For the official, this means meetings, organizing, and providing administrative back-up. One official lamented, in discussing the time spent in responding to survey and study requests,

> There is no study at the present time more justifiable than yours. It's costing us one-half a day of our time. But I don't think the people, the population in this board, realize the incredible amount of material and requests that come through our offices every day. We want to cooperate, but there are limits to what we can do. This involves resources of time and people.

An official in another board stated that, because the supervisory complement and their staffs had been reduced, trustees will just have to understand if reports are late, and parents will have to accept fewer contacts with officials.

Another source of increased workload in central offices is demands from the Ministry of Education and other governmental agencies. Trustees from the largest public board explained that they have four persons in central office working full-time on federal and provincial forms because the demand is so heavy. Many of these are applications for grants. An official in a large separate board stated that the Ministry of Education grant forms for the current year were "classic examples." He explained that lots of paperwork was required, not only at the administrative level, but also for teachers and principals. While he believed that accountability was desirable, the boards do not receive extra staff to handle these tasks.

> Here I am costing programs right down to the individual child to qualify for grant dollars. My function is not an accounting function, but I'm the only one who can do it because I'm involved in the programming. This is all added on to my job.

The Ministry of Education's recent changes in curricular guidelines and in the role of their regional offices (to one of monitoring) have created further demands on supervisory officials in the boards. Changes in H.S.1, for example, required what one official called "severe" adjustments in basic disciplines, but they were given no additional staff to handle those changes. "This just descends on you." The Ministry's local curriculum reviews reportedly were demanding all kinds of details from boards. As one official described these demands,

> "How did you implement The Formative Years? How did you implement metrication within your business operation?" This all requires sitting down with Ministry people day

> after day, which is really secondary to my concern. I'm concerned with education and with making recommendations to the board for the children. I don't have the kind of staff to do that kind of thing. The workload increases and there are fewer people to do it and less time.

The final major factor increasing the workload of central office personnel during a period of declining enrolments stems from the political arena, especially in the area of collective bargaining with teacher federations. At about the same time that enrolments started to decrease, a trustee explained, "We experienced a thing called a collective agreement, and we now have two supervisory officials working bloody well full time trying to administer it. And our payroll department goes nuts." At one of the community meetings recently, a businessman was questioning the size of central office staff. He said his business employs 1,500 people, but he only has three people in his payroll department. In contrast, this very large board has an "army" of twenty in payroll. The kinds of administrative problems engendered by collective agreements will become clearer in a later section of this chapter, when the agreements themselves are reviewed.

Finally, the negotiation process itself places demands on administrators, especially in an age of declining resources. An official in one board explained that they had to go into much more elaborate administrative detail for negotiations. "Teachers demand proof that there's no more money. We have to prove to teachers that administration and other services have suffered cutbacks from decline as much as teachers have."

As boards adapt to decline by reducing the size of the supervisory officer complement and other central office personnel, the organization changes. Responsibilities get redistributed and workloads increase. We have seen that decline creates a climate characterized by additional demands on the time of board administrators and staff. Personnel remaining after cutbacks from central

staff are left with heavier workloads because of the amalgamation of responsibilities (to cover those held by formerly existing positions) and because of the newer demands upon their time. One might call it a double bind.

Solutions have typically come in the form of reorganization, redistribution of functions to other levels within the system, and by the practice of supplementing regular central office personnel with principals, vice-principals or teachers brought in on term appointments or for specific tasks (on a non-supervisory officer level). These trends will be illustrated by reference to the experiences of some of the boards in our sample.

Board #2 has already eliminated three supervisory officer positions and expects to lose another two positions (by attrition). These cuts have been and will be absorbed by revisions in the family-of-schools organization. Families of schools were combined. With the redistribution of responsibilities to the superintendent of schools, the former superintendent of French-language schools was given wider responsibility for English-language schools, and there was some criticism of this change. The director has further modified the organization to include administrative assistants (rather than having assistant superintendents or the like). He anticipates the elimination of one more family of schools and superintendency because of declining enrolments. An additional reason is that large administrative structures, once needed to start up programs, are less necessary now. He intends to explore the possibilities of term appointments or exchanges to alleviate the morale problem caused by lower mobility opportunities and to alleviate workload on remaining officials. These changes have been motivated, to a large extent, by decline.

Board #4 has changed its organization fairly significantly in terms of functional responsibilities, but these changes were implemented after a

routine review. They were not related directly to decline. Essentially, the board has moved from a combination structure (with each of their area superintendents and their associate superintendents having area *and* system-wide responsibilities) to one in which there are two functional superintendents and three area superintendents. They have found it more effective to have functional responsibilities assigned to one person rather than being divided among several superintendents.

Board #1 is just beginning to develop a plan for reorganization under a new director of education. Under the former director, the hot issue was not declining enrolments but rather the need to standardize curriculum across the system. The Formative Years had been released, and the Ministry was pushing for implementation by boards. The director and his administrative staff had proposed a reorganization that would transfer supervisory officers to the curriculum department for this purpose, and that would eliminate the need to replace them by combining eight families of schools. The trustees decided against this plan. Instead, they hired three new supervisory officials and combined five families. That occurred in 1975, two years after decline began to impact on the system.

Currently, the trustees have changed their minds. Plans are now underway to reduce the number of supervisory officials by six over the next five years (largely by attrition). They will combine more families as well as reduce in places like the curriculum department. Because a different kind of supervision of schools will be required, they may consider going back to a regional organization similar to that which existed in the board earlier (two regions of roughly 35,000 pupils). This organization would call for two regional superintendents who would absorb the administrative work now handled by

assistant superintendents (in addition to their responsibilities for school and staff supervision). The number of families would be reduced so that there might be two or more secondary schools plus feeder elementary schools in a family. The area superintendents would thus have larger jurisdictions, but there would be another administrative level between them and the director. This would require some adjustment on the part of the assistant superintendents who might view the move as a demotion. Community reaction would not be expected to be a problem. Ratepayers want fewer "bodies" in administration, and there would be fewer.

The role of officials remaining in the central office of Board #1 would also change with a decrease in numbers. The director foresees combinations of several departments as a way of reducing positions. Persons at the coordinator level might be returned to classrooms. With the combination of middle management positions would come new term appointments. Not only would these appointments ease the workload of officials, but they would also serve as training programs and as morale builders for professional staff throughout the system. The director believes that supervisory officials should be primarily involved in management and supervisory work, but they currently lack the second- or third-level middle management personnel to relieve them from report writing and the like. The system, he believes, has a significant number of top-notch vice-principals who could provide needed expertise for such tasks. Further, his strategy would be to draw more women into the short-term administrative positions. The major morale problem, in his opinion, will be at the school level, and this type of organization would provide opportunities for improving morale.

In Board #3 until a year ago, the supervisory officers were all designated as superintendents of schools, with responsibility for one or more families of schools plus some central function. Last year, there was a big push in the area of curriculum, so one official became superintendent of curriculum. The other three on the academic side remained as superintendents of instruction, with area responsibilities and a modest county portfolio. Because of their use of ad hoc committees consisting of persons across the system, the roles of supervisory officials in this system are somewhat unique. The administrative council, for example, rarely meets and is not a decision-making body. Issues that cross functional lines are dealt with by convening a group of appropriate people on an ad hoc basis. The decisions of this group do not have to go to the administrative council before being forwarded to the board. Similarly, the board has no standing committees but forms ad hoc committees as the need arises, and these may involve teachers and principals. The major reasons for this administrative organization are philosophical ones, although decline did affect the reduction in positions. As the director summarizes it, "Research shows that the time spent in gaining commitment to a program saves time in the end. What kind of commitment would over 1,800 employees and 23,000 pupils have to a decision made by the administrative council?"

The number of supervisory officer positions in Board #5 was reduced primarily to give more autonomy at the school level, although financial restraints contributed to the decision. The organizational changes are making area offices unnecessary, so these might be eliminated. There has been a conscious effort to create a flat structure, to facilitate communication, and to hold people accountable who are directly responsible for a

function. The director does not anticipate further cuts in the supervisory positions because of the system's geography and the need to serve both French and English populations. The business sector, however, has not only been cut back already but will also experience further reductions in force. To reduce workload, the officials engage in job sharing.

In Board #9, the director believes that one problem with reducing central office officials and staff is that central administration could become a bottleneck, frustrating people in the schools. The solution is to reduce workload by transferring much responsibility to the school level. They also try to provide short-term mobility by using administrative assistants and term appointments. Their experience has been that teachers and principals, in a time of retrenchment, are willing to get involved in developing programs. To replace specialists lost from the central office, they are getting much professional support from teachers and principals, which also provides opportunities for growth. Another interesting development is that, with fewer positions in both the academic and business sectors, cooperation is emerging outside of a given area or department. As one official summarized it, "Maybe we're pigeonholing a little less."

This discussion has not mentioned the three smaller systems in our study. The first of these, Board #10, had experienced difficulty in hiring qualified supervisory officers in the past and does not intend to reduce the number of positions (and qualified personnel) that it now has. Its reductions will come in the rank of coordinator. The two smallest boards, Boards #7 and #11, have only two supervisory officers now. Each has lost one position. In addition, each of the boards has lost the bulk of its coordinative or consultative positions of responsibility at the school level to provide a budget for

unexpected expenses. They draw in school personnel for specific assignments to provide flexibility and to give professional growth opportunities and administrative experience to a larger group of people.

Coping with Surplus Space: School Closures or Alternative Strategies

Virtually all of the boards in our sample currently have surplus space because of declining enrolments. Not all of the schools within a single board jurisdiction, however, have surplus space. Indeed, the unevenness of decline across a system is one of the issues that complicates decision making. This will be discussed as one of the constraints in the next chapter. Here we will simply describe the situation across the boards and the strategies they are using to provide rationalization in the use of school accommodations.

As an illustration of the extent of surplus space, the disposition of which necessitates board and administrative decisions, we collected data from the seven boards of education in our sample (see Table 8). All of the boards except the largest one already had some surplus space in *both* the elementary and secondary panels in 1976. For most boards, the immediate problems centre on the elementary situation. Within the next decade, however, the more critical arena will be within the secondary panel. Board #1, for example, is projected to experience declines in secondary enrolment as high as 40% or more by 1986.

Information about surplus pupil space provides an indication of the problem confronting boards in determining effective and efficient use of school accommodations in a period of declining enrolment. Because the surplus spaces do not exist neatly in particular schools or even in schools located near to

another school with surplus space, the obvious strategy of school closures and amalgamations is not always viable. Many variables enter into a decision to close schools, not the least of which is negative parent reaction to decisions that violate the tradition of the neighbourhood school.

The directors of education whom we interviewed were asked how many elementary schools in their jurisdiction currently had enrolment levels that would suggest the need to close the facility (if the decision were considered in isolation from other factors). In each case the enrolment level that would signal a lack of viability was that designated by the system concerned. Viable elementary school size tends to be defined differently among boards, likely depending upon the board's size and its average school enrolment. Nevertheless, the range of definitions is fairly narrow and falls between a high of fewer than 200 pupils in Boards #1 and #3 to a low of 99 pupils in Boards #6 and #7. Responses from six of the eleven directors are indicative of the severity of the problem facing boards (see Table 9).

These examples are not given to suggest that the next few years will see closures of this scope in *any* of the boards concerned. Very few schools have actually been closed in Ontario to date. This situation exists despite the fact that most boards have been conducting studies and have been identifying criteria and procedures for taking drastic decisions such as closure. In a few cases, like that of Board #7, no closures are anticipated because of the distances involved between schools. Rather, the small and geographically-dispersed boards are attempting to reorganize their schools to diffuse the impact of decline across the system. There is an understandable reluctance among trustees and administrators in all boards to make decisions that are likely to be questioned vocally and volatilely by parents. Yet the same

TABLE 8

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF SURPLUS PUPIL SPACES AND CLASSROOMS (1976)
FOR SEVEN BOARDS OF EDUCATION

Board	Elementary			Secondary		
	Enrolment	Surplus Pupil Spaces		Enrolment	Surplus Pupil Spaces	
		Spaces	Rooms		Spaces	Rooms
Board #1	60,175	38,841	1,295	36,203	0	0
Board #2	20,599	10,083	336	14,359	4,281	153
Board #3	13,292	3,629	121	9,198	1,347	48
Board #4	12,099	4,389	146	6,744	1,486	53
Board #5	7,365	4,327	144	9,232	2,207	79
Board #6	9,116	4,240	141	6,968	3,537	126
Board #7	2,089	707	24	1,675	210	8

TABLE 9

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WITH ENROLMENT LEVELS THAT WOULD INDICATE
POSSIBLE CLOSURE (IN SIX OF THE SAMPLE SCHOOL BOARDS)

Board	Total Number of Elementary Schools	Enrolment Level Indicative of Closure	Number of Elementary Schools Below Level	Percentage of Total
Board #1	116	Below 200	20 (10 more likely)	17% (26%)
Board #3	46	Below 200	15 (2 more likely)	32% (37%)
Board #5	40	Below 50% rated capacity	8	20%
Board #6	59	Below 100	5	9%
Board #7	11	Below 100	2	18%
Board #9	65	Below 160	11	17%

persons join the other ratepayers in protests about increased taxes. In this climate, boards appear to consider alternatives that would delay the need for the more drastic action of closure.

Six of the eleven boards in our sample now have some policy or guidelines that provide the basis for decisions regarding school closures or alternative uses of surplus space. Typically, the procedures leading to decisions are fairly complex and include efforts to involve parents and school staffs. The other five boards do not have formal policies or procedures that were developed especially to deal with this issue. Rather, they seem to have followed what might be described as "standard operating procedures." More specifically, there tends to be study and review by supervisory officials and their administrative staffs, leading to recommendations forwarded to the board. Although parents or school staffs may have been involved, the procedure for reaching the recommendation stage has not been specifically designed and approved by the board as a result of declining enrolments. Some of these boards are currently in the process of developing specific policies or procedures for this area of concern.

Where policies or procedures have been developed to deal with the problem of surplus space and the lack of viability of a school because of decline, the overarching principle seems to be that of involvement. Decisions seem rarely to be taken without the prior involvement of parents, school trustees, school principals, teachers, and central office administrators. The actual format and stages vary among the boards studied, and the policies and guidelines furnished us by boards are being made available to the Commission on Declining Enrolments. Here we present brief summaries of typical patterns.

In most cases, the process of considering closure or alternatives begins when an elementary school is identified by the administration as being below

a satisfactory enrolment level. (In some cases, the level for receiving study has been designated in advance by the board.) At that time, the board typically strikes an ad hoc study committee. The membership generally includes the principal of the school concerned, one or two teachers, one or two trustees, the supervisory official having responsibility for the school, and one to three parents or other community residents. Some boards designate the method by which teacher, trustee, and parent representatives will be chosen; for example, the branch affiliate may be asked to elect the teacher(s).

Board guidelines usually provide some direction for the study committee, including types of information they are charged to examine, criteria to be considered, and (sometimes) the format and evidence expected in the report to the board. If their deliberations are likely to impact upon another school in the system, some boards include procedures for adding representation from the second school and its community as well.

Once the ad hoc committee has arrived at a preliminary report and recommendations, there is usually a requirement that the information be presented to a public meeting. The report is then to be reconsidered in the light of the discussion, revised if necessary, and forwarded to the board. The board procedures may also include time lines for acting upon a closure decision, with provisions for communication to parents likely to be affected. In at least one board, the policy includes procedures for involvement of the relevant principal's association if the decision has produced a redundant principalship.

The general pattern described above might not fit exactly the actual strategy of any one of the boards concerned, but our analysis indicates that

the essential elements are present in varying degrees in six of the eleven boards. One area of variability from the pattern is the extent of independent review and study by system administrators. Board #6, for example, requires that the report of its ad hoc committee be considered by the administrative council (supervisory officials) before it is considered by the board. The council has the option of presenting alternative recommendations and rationales. Indeed, if a school's enrolment falls below 100, the administrative council may recommend immediate closure to the board, and closure may be implemented during that school year. The ad hoc committee procedures apply only to schools *approaching* lack of viability, not to those that have already reached a point of being non-viable. The board has established the enrolment categories.

In another case, Board #5, the supervisory officials identify schools significantly below capacity and present recommendations to the appropriate principal's association. Only when these administrative groups have considered alternatives does the board appoint an ad hoc committee to review the report and recommendations. If the special committee agrees to recommend closure or a change of school boundaries, an information meeting is held for the school community concerned. With this input, the ad hoc committee proceeds to make its recommendations to the board. Throughout the process in this board, all reports (both administrative and that of the special board committee) must be organized into a five-year plan.

As noted, five of the boards studied do not yet have policies or procedures specifically developed to consider possible school closures. Nevertheless, some of these boards have made decisions related to surplus space, using regularly-established procedures. Two of the separate school boards, for example, have "twinned" or amalgamated schools. Both Boards #8 and #10 have two sets of

amalgamated schools. This strategy has allowed the boards to keep school buildings open while enjoying a cost saving in terms of school principal stipends, secretarial salaries, and the like.

Although Board #7 is unable to close elementary schools (because of geographical distances), it is implementing a reorganization that will create more viable enrolment levels. Grades K-7 will be housed in schools in five geographic zones; grades 8 and 9 from all zones will attend a single school; and grades 10-13 will attend a secondary school. In essence, the plan created a tri-level system; the intermediate level (8-9) has not been present in the system formerly.

Board #1 has ten special school study committees meeting at the present time, but it has not formally adopted a complete procedure leading to closure decisions. As this report is being written, the board is considering the adoption of a procedure and a timetable for closing elementary schools as enrolments drop to 120 students or fewer. The process was designed by the board's department of planning and plant and would involve the review and analysis of relevant schools by a committee of the board. Although this process specifies a minimal time period that must pass before the management committee debates the study and makes recommendations to the full board (in order to allow parents and affected staff to be fully informed), it would place major responsibilities with senior staff rather than with ad hoc committees. Likely, other policies or procedures will be developed by this board for schools in which enrolment falls between 120 and 200, in the light of recent reports from officials indicating the extent of surplus spaces and the number of schools with enrolments approaching non-viability.

Since declining enrolments have yet to impact on the secondary school to the same degree as that on the elementary school, the boards typically have not developed procedures and guidelines for that area of operation. Indeed, only two of the boards felt that closure might be a consideration for a secondary school in their jurisdiction over the next several years. In the first case, Board #6 unsuccessfully had attempted to close one of its collegiates. Adverse community reactions caused a change of plans. The board then contracted for a study by Educational Consultants of Canada. Their report recommended that decisions regarding closure be related to total secondary school enrolments across the system. Instead of closing a school with low enrolment, it was recommended that secondary school boundaries be reorganized until the total enrolment across all secondary schools mandated more drastic changes.

The largest board has designated secondary enrolment levels that might indicate a need for closure — 800 for academic schools and 1,200 for composite secondary schools. Using these enrolment levels in isolation from other factors, two of its twenty secondary schools might reach the point of review over the next several years. At the moment, however, Board #1 still has several thousand more secondary students than its rated capacity would indicate. Excess students are accommodated in portable facilities in several areas.

It is interesting that, as Board #7 is just implementing a tri-level organization, Board #1 is beginning to question the desirability and feasibility of its tri-level pattern of organization in a period of declining enrolments. A Junior High School Task Force is reviewing the need for a separate transitional school for young adolescents and the relative costs of various types of grade mixes of transitional schools. Data from the board's department of

planning have provided evidence of the expense of maintaining an intermediate educational facility. For example, the actual 1976 spending levels of the board were 13.5% above ceilings for the elementary panel, 25.6% above ceilings for the junior high schools, and 19.6% above ceilings for the secondary schools. On this basis, it was suggested that the junior high schools might be receiving more than their fair share of total resources. The board will likely be moving to reconsideration of their school organizational pattern, although the parents and trustees may react adversely to any proposals for change.

Coping with Surplus Staff: Redundancy Policies and Collective Agreements

In the first section of this chapter, we reported the reduction in force made in the board administrative offices. We found that no board had formal policies regarding redundancy in the category of supervisory official, professional staff, or support staff. Rather, these positions were being reduced by attrition or, in the case of professional staff, by returning to other positions in the school. While professional staff personnel may have tenure as teachers, it is not clear whether or not this could apply to a supervisory officer.

Teachers, on the other hand, have generally sought protection in the form of tenure and redundancy clauses in collective agreements. They have some form of protection for redundancy in each of the eleven boards in our sample, although there is great variation in this provision. School principals have not been the subject of separate policies or agreement clauses in many boards as yet, since they have tenure as teachers. This situation might change in the light of declining enrolments. Similarly, boards have not generally adopted

new policies regarding the transfer or promotion of principals, but this, too, might change.

For those boards in which teacher tenure and redundancy have been negotiated, there was a tendency also to include clauses in the collective agreement that relate to teacher workload, pupil-teacher ratio, and the like. In some cases, these issues were handled outside the agreement in letters of understanding or through formal provision for teacher involvement in related decisions. Since these issues influence the identification of surplus staff and even the provision of program, they must be considered in this discussion. While the teachers' federations were becoming more aggressive in negotiations processes prior to declining enrolments, the current climate has provided a further stimulus to their activities. In those jurisdictions where the collective agreements that we studied tended to be the lengthiest and most detailed, there were also perceptions that the relationship between teachers and administrators was strained.

The situation in Board #1 is unique in the sense that policies regarding teacher tenure, seniority, transfer, and redundancy are negotiated first between the various federation affiliates and the Metropolitan Toronto School Board. Board #1 and its affiliates then agree to additional terms and conditions. For example, for 1977-78, the board and its OSSTF affiliates agreed to establish a trustee-teacher-administrator committee (not to discuss matters under negotiation). Further, a letter of intent accompanied their agreement, which outlined procedures for affiliate involvement in allocation of staff and in the determination and placement of surplus teachers. Within the Metro-wide collective agreement with OSSTF, roughly three pages are devoted to surplus and tenure. The total document is 85 pages in length.

The 1977-79 collective agreement between Board #1 and the branch affiliates of FWTAO and of OPSMTF is 75 pages long and includes five pages devoted to surplus procedures. These comments illustrate why the director of education stated that the redundancy clauses were "tight as a drum." Although they will likely be revised, the revision would not be expected to change the basic premises. Enormous work is created for central staff because of the agreements. Implementing the seniority clauses alone is a major task.

Collective agreements have effectively constrained the flexibility of some boards in dealing with decline. This is clearly the case in Board #1. For example, the peak enrolment at the secondary level occurs on September 30th, the day, according to the collective agreement, when enrolments must be applied to staffing formulae. From September 30th to June 30th, the system loses approximately 1% of its secondary students per month. Thus 9% are lost during the year, even though the schools are staffed at the peak level. The loss in enrolment levels during the year affects provincial grants but not staffing formulae.

Another example of constraints to administrative flexibility occurs at the school level. In Board #1, according to the Metro agreement with the OSSTF affiliates, secondary principals must timetable so as to honour the following: (1) each teacher must have one free period, 40 minutes a day, during which no one can impinge on his or her time; (2) each teacher must have a 40-minute lunch break, in which no one can impinge on his or her time; (3) each teacher must have a 40-minute free period subject only to assigned supervision or "on call" duties; (4) no teacher can have more than three preparations a day (probationary teacher) or more than four preparations (experienced teacher); and (5) no teacher can have more than four class periods in a row without a

break. Add to these restrictions a clause that provides a procedure by which a teacher may complain if his or her teaching workload is thought to be excessive (e.g., his or her pro-rated pupil period contacts are higher than the average for that school) and one can appreciate why the principal's flexibility is reduced.

Officials who were interviewed in Board #9 agreed that, a few years ago, they had no demands from their teachers for things such as redundancy clauses. Now their agreements have clauses on teacher tenure, seniority, and dismissal for redundancy. They do have a clause which is over-riding that, all other things being equal, the good of the system must prevail over the seniority of the staff. They stated that this had been a difficult clause to get included. The teachers had demanded a clause on pupil-teacher ratio, but this was not included in the current contract. They compromised with a system-wide staffing committee that recommends PTR but cannot make the decision. Interviewees felt that a new move would be made on this issue; "it is bound to happen in a period of decline." Principals are attempting to gain tenure as principals through the bargaining process because they realize that decline may bring about principal redundancies as well.

Board #9 also has agreed to a teacher-trustee committee, to which teachers can bring their difficulties. It appears to be a good arena for the venting of feelings. The system had a very bad experience with the "resignation" prior to Bill 100, and this had had an ongoing negative impact. The entire negotiation process, being a confrontation model (the adversary system) has a negative impact on morale, according to interviewees. While the joint committee may alleviate negative feelings to some extent, declining enrolments appear to have stimulated teacher demands in the areas of job security and in control of decisions that formerly were the responsibility of boards.

Teacher redundancy clauses were added to the collective agreements in Board #5 after decline started. They have also developed an administrative policy with their principals that relates to principal redundancy. Teacher workload and PTR are covered in a letter of commitment from the board to the branch affiliates. The fact that this is outside the agreement was viewed simply as a "matter of semantics." The director expressed his concerns clearly:

> In declining enrolments, I know that teachers have to be protected, but what is too bad about it is that the major area where decisions are going to have to be taken will be relegated to the negotiating table. I'm not going to pass a value judgement on that, but it certainly is a new ball-game. It's difficult . . . . I like it in that it protects people. That's good, and I think you need that. On the other hand, it can emasculate boards and it can become, as far as the public is concerned, a hard pill to swallow. And it very much impacts on our management. Federations have gone out to pin down the jobs and maintain the numbers, etc., and you do that through workload, PTR, and class size.

Prior to the time when the board experienced a teacher strike, there was a great deal of involvement, with teachers volunteering to serve on curriculum committees, study groups, and the like. After Bill 100, the director stated that the attitude seemed to be, "No, we don't want to talk about that because that's going to impinge upon the negotiation process." He perceived a significant change in the administration's relationships with the branch affiliates recently. For example, they now have a study group on declining enrolments, with one administrator, one trustee, and members from the four affiliates. This seems to be operating well and very positively. He concluded, "The last six months have seen the most encouraging and cooperative signs we've had for awhile."

The director of Board #2 explained that the board has resisted the whole seniority issue as the priority in redundancy decisions. Their view is that seniority is only one of the factors; program is another. While they have no

difficulty with elementary teacher branch affiliates, the secondary affiliates have disputed this argument and others put forward by the board. They want redundancy based upon seniority alone. The board argues that you cannot have quality instruction that way, so this issue is a continuing subject of debate.

The present collective agreement in Board #2 does not include many clauses that restrict administrative flexibility, but the secondary affiliates are pushing for the inclusion of things like PTR, pupil contacts, class size, and staffing formulae. The director commented, "They want them all in writing. They seem to feel they can't trust the administration." The board has a policy on staffing. In addition, they have had memoranda of understanding relevant to this issue. The secondary affiliates insisted on the creation of a pool of eight teachers in addition to the staff generated under the PTR formula. Before, the board added staff in September if there was a problem related to the memo of understanding (e.g., academic classes normally have thirty pupils; technical, twenty; and vocational, sixteen and twenty). The affiliates want all these issues (and more) put into the contract.

Board #2 has enjoyed a good relationship with its elementary teachers. The affiliate executives meet often and regularly with the administrators, and they iron out problems in that way. Rarely has a problem been taken to the negotiation table. Although invitations to meet have been extended to the secondary affiliates, there have been no meetings this year. As a result, there is increasing pressure to add more and more to the collective agreement. Their agreements do contain grievance procedures. The only group in the entire jurisdiction (including CUPE, secretarial, and elementary teachers) from which they receive frequent grievances is the secondary teachers. The director created a committee at the secondary school level so that a teacher could take

a complaint to the principal, department heads, and staff representatives. This system does not work well in all schools, primarily because some principals are perceived to be unable to handle it; they feel threatened. Many were appointed at a time when the principal was the boss, and they have been unable to adjust to this new role. Thus central administrators and the board must deal with problems.

The other board in which we found serious constraints to administrative flexibility for dealing with surplus staff was Board #6. This was one of the few boards in which a policy currently is being formulated to deal with principal redundancy. Their collective agreement with secondary affiliates includes clauses related to maximum student contacts, which the board will attempt to remove this year. According to the clause, there would be a maximum of 90 student contacts per teacher. This was agreed upon in the spring after school principals had timetabled classes and staffs for both semesters of this school year. The director had been receiving grievances from teachers the first semester and expects more this term. The 90 contacts mean no more than 30 per class, but some classes had 31 or 32. Even though other classes might have only 17 or 20 pupils, the teacher with 91 student contacts would grieve.

The director explained why the board would try to remove this clause. "It's just something you can't manage unless it works both ways. If you have 85% of a total load, then others are going to have to bear something higher." The board feels that it is worth going to arbitration to get this clause removed. At present, if 35 or 40 pupils want a particular course, they would have to offer two classes. The board cannot always afford to do that. The result is that if teachers refuse to have them all in one class, the course would have to be dropped altogether.

The elementary level agreements contain a clause introduced before declining enrolments that states that tenure is assured for all teachers under continuous employment with the board who have permanent certificates. The director explained that this clause created no problems when attrition solved surplus problems. Declining enrolments have been accompanied by declining attrition rates, so the board's view now is that this clause must be removed.

The board and secondary affiliates had to go into fact finding before last year's settlement on the issue of class size. According to the latest collective agreement, the board has agreed to maximum class sizes for September 1978. Teachers cannot be assigned to teach for more than 75% of the day and cannot be required to supervise any classes except their regularly scheduled classes. These clauses, according to board administrators, "tend to reduce flexibility in organization of both student and teacher timetables and therefore may restrict the numbers of courses available to students each year as enrolment declines. The restrictions in course offerings may in turn result in teaching assignments outside areas of specialization." The teachers want further reductions in class size maxima, but this would create severe financial restraints since grants are based on classes of 30. Smaller classes would have to be paid for by local taxpayers.

The Board #6 director stated that no one disagreed with the premise that it was better to have smaller classes. In a period of decline, however, the money is simply not available to do this. Even now, courses are disappearing because of the clauses they have. Hardest hit are the languages and computer sciences classes. One teacher volunteered this year to teach four classes. "He was just trying to help out, but the federation made an issue of it, and

the principal had to tell him he could only teach three classes." This situation illustrates the problem generated when issues are settled according to the agreement rather than on the basis of educational consequences.

The other six boards in our sample have not experienced as much difficulty in teacher negotiations relative to surplus staff as have the former five boards. Board #7, for example, has a brief section on tenure in the collective agreement with its OSSTF affiliate. Priority for retention of position is to be based upon qualifications, teaching experience, and service with the board (in that order). The interviewees explained that their affiliates in the past have been fairly autonomous, but that this was changing. Even so, federation representatives from Toronto had been fairly open and, in one instance, helped to reassure the local affiliates that the board's stance was sound. As the director summarized it, "Maybe it's because we're so damn far up here that they don't want to bother. We have not had a lot of trouble with federation people from Toronto."

The current agreements have very little in them related to PTR and staff ratios, but there has been some pressure to include the latter. The elementary affiliates, for example, have been pressuring for specialized positions (e.g., music, art, physical education) on the basis of improving the program. This would increase staff; it would create jobs. The board has been able to resist this pressure thus far. The secondary affiliates are also putting on some pressure to negotiate PTR and to include redundancy clauses. The teachers want to protect the present PTR; the board plans to increase it.

Board #7 primarily does not want to follow the trend in other boards -- "some are locked in so tightly they can't release anyone." At the moment, they do hire some teachers on a term contract. This should help get around

restrictions, not in a legal sense, but in the sense that the person comes in with realistic expectations. Their reorganization will result in two redundant principals. The affiliates want these matters settled on a straight seniority basis; the board takes an opposite view. Although the board has involved the elementary principals in planning and examination of alternatives (including seniority), the interviewee stated, "I have a feeling they're [the affiliates] looking over our shoulder, very carefully watching and ready, if we don't come up with something acceptable."

Although Board #11 has yielded to pressure from its branch affiliates and has clauses on redundancy and seniority in its agreements, there are few local problems with regard to negotiating PTR or class size. Class sizes and PTR are very low in the schools of this system because of the dispersal of population. The federation representatives, however, "cannot believe that the board supports low PTR and low class sizes. They still tell the affiliates to go back and insist that class sizes be negotiated." At the moment, the board has no minimum or maximum class size policy. The result is that some classes have only two or three pupils; the three largest classes in the system have twenty-five pupils; and their current policy does not permit more than two grade levels within a single class. If they negotiated a maximum class size, the board *could* go into multi-grade classes. This would be counterproductive. In the same way, the redundancy clause that the federation insisted that the local affiliates get into the contract "took away from the teachers rather than giving to them," according to the director, and made it more difficult for him to place the teachers, to negotiate on an individual basis. The teacher-trustee committee (three trustees, nine teachers) that was established by the agreement is not working because "it never served a real need."

Despite fairly good relationships with the affiliates, the negotiation work is very demanding since there are only two administrators to do all the research.

Board #8 is receiving pressure to use seniority as the criterion for redundancy. At the moment, the board enjoys a fair amount of flexibility. They are able to select teachers from four-year groupings. That is, teachers with from three to six years experience would be in one group, and the board could select any individuals from that group. The director believes they may be the only board in the province right now with that kind of clause in a collective agreement. He is of the opinion that teachers, if they would be honest about it, would admit that this flexible agreement is in the best interests of children since it allows competency and qualifications to supersede seniority as criteria. The board's strategy in negotiations is to go in with counter-proposals, many of which involve taking away things granted in previous years. This has reportedly been a very useful strategy because the affiliates spend a lot of their energy trying to recover things they had previously.

While there is nothing in the present agreements currently about PTR or workload formulae, they have had some problems. They expect resistance to the twinning or combining of schools, for example. They have been trying to avoid possible redundancies by moving people from the principalship to in-and-out positions like that of program coordinator. If they negotiated a clause regarding principal redundancies, they would insist that competency be a factor. They expect some teacher reaction to the whole notion of term appointments for principalships and the like.

There is a redundancy clause in the collective agreement of Board #10 but no PTR or workload clauses. The only thing related to the latter is

a clause insisted upon by the affiliates that involves a principal's time off from teaching. It has worked against the teachers. The principal, according to the agreement, has to teach for a day or a day and a half per week. If the board had the flexibility to do so, they would not hold every principal to this. Similarly, the teachers attempted to negotiate a maximum class size. The director believes that the number they chose (32) was because that was the number in the collective agreement in a neighbouring city. The board showed its affiliates that their maximum was 29 pupils, so they might reduce staff if the maximum of 32 went into the agreement. In short, the board has tried to convince its affiliates that the less that goes into the agreement rather than being left to board policy, the better off they are.

Board #4 has lost 1,300 school children thus far with decline, but there have been few major problems with regard to surplus staff. The director stated that the teachers do attempt, in bargaining, to abrogate to themselves certain things that, historically, have been prerogatives of the board. To the present time, there are not many of those clauses in the collective agreements, and the board "still feels that it manages the schools."

This board has refused to include PTR or staffing formulae in the agreements, but it does set up several committees in order to have consultations with teachers. Both elementary and secondary committees, for example, review staff allocations; the board makes final decisions that could go through grievance and arbitration processes. When a program of restraint was initiated two years ago, the teachers were given a voice but no vote. Their experience suggests that the committee system, over a period of time, is a means of getting across to teachers the messages that trustees get from their constituents. This is seen as much better than having issues settled at the bargaining table. The director summarized the trends he sees:

> We're coming to an era where boards are going to have difficulties with professional staff. This is inevitable. We can see that there's a cutback in the level of service in the many areas, such as hospitals and the mails. I think it's going to come in educational service too. We've just been adding each year — more staff, more services, better facilities. I think that's come to an end, and it's taking us a while to get that into our consciousness and that of the general public. The general public just doesn't want to pay for that level of services. It's difficult for us in education to realize this.

Board #3, in keeping with its style of administration and organization, established a Task Force for Implications of a Changing System (ICS), where cross-role groups work together to develop solutions and direction. As a result of this task force, there are few clauses in the collective agreements that deal with surplus staff. Instead, the findings of the task force are incorporated into reports and letters of intent. The board does have policies on teacher transfer and surplus, including an interpretation and review procedure. The document of intent establishes certain intentions that cannot be gone against unilaterally. It does not mean, according to the director, that the board has not got the management rights. Rather, they should, to all intents and purposes, call in the branch affiliates to explain decisions and share problems.

The affiliates in Board #3 reportedly have accepted the letter of intent, "even in the midst of the crisis today." The whole ICS process "diffused a lot of the tensions, unknowns, and fears" that were there. The teachers realized they were contributing to their own destiny. Even in the last negotiations, there was no great pressure to include things in the contract so that jobs would be protected. The director realized that the threat of pressure from affiliates is "always there, ready to rear its head, if you screw up the process."

The director attributes the productive relationship that exists between trustees, teachers, and officials in dealing with issues related to decline to the climate established through a long-term period of involvement developed prior to decline. As a result, "The teachers became part of the solution, not part of the problem." He feels strongly that administrators cannot wait until a crisis arrives to develop a process for coping with the crisis. In Board #3, the groundwork was set long before the crisis. They essentially had established a problem-solving organization that was flexible and that involved people in working together to identify solutions. As he put it, "A director can't say, in the midst of crisis, I'll introduce trust into our system tomorrow."

The ICS (a core committee plus subcommittees) is a typical example of the organizational structure and procedures in this board, and it has been effective in dealing with decline. The teachers enter such a group realizing the solution cannot be to add teachers; they had to be realistic in suggesting solutions for handling redundancy. The director stated that if the administrative council had been given this task, there would have been "all kinds of static" and, besides, they would likely not have considered some of the alternatives that teachers might suggest. Their redundancy policy was developed in this way.

Changes in General Program Organization

In the first two sections of this chapter, we discussed changes occurring in the administrative organization and the provision of education (school closures). Decisions taken in both of these areas will impact on the general program organization of boards. Board #7, for example, has moved to a tri-level

system (K-7, 8-9, and 10-13) for its schools. This new organization will affect educational program. Board #1 and other boards are moving to combine families of schools, a change with potential impact on curriculum and program. Board #1 also is reviewing its present program organization (K-6, 7-9, 10-13) and may change from its pattern of junior high schools.

Other changes will come about less systematically in many boards. In Board #5, for example, two formerly K-8 schools have been reorganized. One school now is K-4, and the other has grades 5-8. These kinds of changes will likely become much more common as boards must consolidate schools in a period of decline.

Finally, the impact of decline on educational program has not been as visibly identified in discussions to date as has been the problem of reductions in force or even the issue of school closure. Nevertheless, the impact could be considerable. In particular, programs now in existence in most schools within a system may have to be reduced and provided in selected schools. Since there is a separate study on curriculum, we have not attempted rigorously to examine board strategies in this area of concern. The next chapter does provide a background of problems that boards will face in coping with the impact of decline on educational program.

Summary

This chapter has examined the current policies and strategies developed by our sample of boards to deal with the impact of decline. We have examined the changes in administrative organization and staffing, the strategies related to school closures, and redundancy policies and collective agreements that bear upon the issue of reductions in force.

Most of the school boards in our sample have found it necessary to develop new policies or to modify existing ones in order to provide an organizational basis for decisions related to decline on school accommodations, personnel, and program. In several cases, the efforts made to date by boards in this regard were viewed as inadequate or as needing some modification. Thus, the descriptions in this chapter represent the situation at this point in time, but this will change as declining enrolments impact more heavily. We turn now to an analysis of the constraints boards and administrators face in attempting to identify more effective ways of coping with decline.

CHAPTER IV

CONSTRAINTS FACED BY BOARDS IN COPING WITH DECLINE

It is difficult for persons outside the educational system to appreciate fully the traumas of school boards in coping with the ramifications of declining enrolments. A general reaction seems to be, "If enrolment projections several years ago showed that decline was coming, why didn't they do something then?" One of the major reasons most boards could not "do" something "then" was that they were still coping with expansion. As one trustee recalled, "We were so choked with kids, we couldn't do anything except build, build, build."

Consider Board #1 as an example of one extreme. Its school enrolment peaked at 106,169 pupils during the 1972-73 school year. During the expansion period preceding 1972, a new school might open one fall and be surrounded by portable classrooms the next fall. Many of its secondary schools are still overcrowded. As the board's educational planners begin to shift to a period in which the enrolments may go down to 70,000 pupils, they find themselves with 10,000,000 square feet of space. The board is the largest "business" in the community in terms of number of employees (including some 4,900 teachers) and they are one of the largest property owners in Canada.

One of the trustees believes that, although the job of gearing down such a system will not be a simple one, declining enrolments are going to be their salvation, not their doom. "If we hadn't started to decline, we would really have been in trouble because society couldn't afford the cost of running the educational system." It is difficult, however, for a teacher who is being laid off to accept that this is "the greatest thing that ever happened." The positive aspects for a system like Board #1 are that they can stop concentrating on school construction and can start to concentrate on improving the instructional system. Declining enrolments eventually may mean, for this and other large urban boards, a system that is more viable and manageable. Their major problems will involve reducing staff humanely, making rational decisions regarding school closures, and making judicious decisions with regard to surplus property.

Small school boards have very different reasons for not adjusting smoothly to a period of declining enrolments because their problems are quite different. Their attention has been, and continues to be, focused upon provision of a quality (or even adequate) educational program, usually in areas of sparse population and a low tax base. Board #7, for example, had an enrolment peak of around 4,700 pupils. With decline, it may eventually have fewer than 3,000 pupils. In the last five years, its total decline rate has been 14%, the second highest in our sample of public boards. Yet it cannot realistically close more schools. Some pupils already travel 55 miles by bus to the system's only secondary school; other children ride a bus 42 miles to attend an elementary school. Decline compounds the difficulties the board faces in providing adequate educational services in schools, spread out over 1,000 square miles, that have always been relatively small.

For some small systems, declining enrolments eventually may mean total lack of viability as a system, at least in a financial sense, unless grant provisions are changed substantially.

In short, there are a variety of reasons why boards have not responded overnight to the advent of declining enrolments, and the reasons are as varied as the situations of the boards themselves. For most boards in the province, the beginning of decline was likely a welcome relief from overcrowding. The energies of boards and administrators had been directed for years to the challenges of an era of expansion, and their responses had been admirable. In a short period of time, the system had provided the schools, programs, and staff that were needed. The problems that boards faced then, difficult as they were, were "a piece of cake" compared to the problems boards face now in dismantling that system. While relatively few school closures have been made to date and the reduction in force has been relatively minor, boards will no longer be able to delay reaching some difficult, painful, but essential decisions. The critical time is upon us.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss a number of factors that are paramount in hindering local school boards from successfully coping with the problems associated with declining enrolments. The first section examines problems within the board and its community, ranging from the geography of the board to the attitudes and expectations of its residents. Hindrances to board decision making that stem, either directly or indirectly, from the provincial government and its Ministry of Education are discussed in the second section. These areas of concern include a number of problems related to current educational financing, programmatic expectations and guidelines, and legislation and regulations pertaining to teachers. An understanding of

these problems may increase public and governmental sensitivity to the dilemmas faced by local boards at this critical period of time.

Constraints Internal to the Board and Its Community

Demography

Some of the barriers to identifying solutions to the problems of decline arise from the demographic characteristics of the board -- its geography, the mobility of the population within the jurisdiction, the ethnic mix of its people, and the socioeconomic characteristics of its people. There is nothing that a board can do to control these factors, just as the board can do nothing to change birth rates. These factors *always* constrain educational planning and provision; declining enrolments merely serve to magnify the constraints. The board must take these factors as "givens" and must develop plans that provide an effective educational system within the limits so imposed.

Dispersal of students over a wide geographical area necessitates small school populations (often under 100 pupils) and makes it difficult for boards to provide adequate staff and program. In many cases, the sparsity of the population and the distance between settlements means that the school board is virtually required to sustain the small schools at the expense of other schools in the system. Consolidation of schools is not a reasonable alternative; most often, students are already travelling a good distance to the schools that exist. As an official in one board summarized it, "It's not likely that we're going to close too many, because we'd be trucking students all over God's creation."

Boards #7 and #11 are two examples where geographical factors are paramount. In Board #7, population shifts have resulted in the board's providing more busing than it did nine years ago, but for significantly fewer pupils. A trustee explained that busing costs have increased at the same time that enrolments have decreased. "We need more money, more money, more money, just to provide the same services." It would not help to create a larger school board by amalgamating it with another public school board in the area since the outlying schools are very far apart. "You can't just say, 'What's another 100 miles for the kid to ride a bus?'" Board #11 has only a total of 1,511 students spread in small schools over an area 30 miles by 80 miles. Enrolments are declining all across the area, making it difficult to reallocate staff and accommodate the smaller schools.

Most of the medium-sized boards have at least one urban centre and some rural areas. The impact of declining enrolments accordingly must be dealt with by different strategies. In Board #3, for example, trustees stated that it was possible to save some program provisions in the city by combining school groups and offering particular programs in a single location, but this strategy would be impossible to implement in the northern part of the county where schools are isolated from each other. Staffing formulae for the small rural schools cannot be based only on the system's average pupil-teacher ratio (PTR); the schools must have a certain number of teachers to offer a reasonable program despite the limited number of pupils.

Board #8 has similar problems, with around 10,000 of their total 21,453 students located outside of the city in the surrounding areas. Administrative costs will remain high in schools that must be kept open because the sparsity of the Catholic population makes combination almost impossible. In cases like

this, "if you have a 10% decline in enrolment, and you scatter that across the schools in the system, it's very difficult to reduce your operating costs by the same 10%."

Interviewees in Board #5 spoke of a related problem in rural areas -- the situation in which two systems, public and separate, are vying for students. In several areas of their jurisdiction, Catholics are in a majority and the public board may have only a three-room school. The reverse situation occurs in the rural areas where the majority are Protestant. The result is that both boards have high operating costs. Further, both boards must maintain enough supervisory officers to serve the entire area. In both systems, then, direct and indirect costs per pupil are higher in the rural schools than in the schools in the larger centres.

When the population within a board is highly mobile, costs per pupil may also be difficult to reduce in accord with declining enrolments. In Board #1, for example, some schools experience a 100% turnover in the school population every year. "We have a couple of schools that have around 500 kids at any point in the year, but, over the course of the year, 250 have withdrawn and been replaced by 250 more." This kind of situation forces the board to change the resource allocation from that of its formula. The normal formula, for instance, allows one secretary for a school with 500 pupils and no vice-principal. One secretary, however, cannot handle all the work of keeping the records, trying to get OSR's on incoming students, and responding to requests for records of withdrawing students. The board tries to alleviate the situation "by pumping in extra resources at the para-professional level so that a teacher will have to deal with only some of the new kids coming in so rapidly." The result is that the more stable areas in the borough subsidize the less stable areas.

Board #9 did an intensive study of the mobility of pupils within the city system and found that 43% of their total population were in schools other than the ones they had attended the school year before. This pattern is very significant, according to the director, in terms of the necessary record-keeping, follow-up, taxation in the assessment department, and the like. Moreover, there are tremendous implications for the universality of programs across the system and for staff to coordinate the programs. "If pupils move that frequently, we must be able to guarantee that the grade 2 program a youngster has in one school will fit neatly into the grade 3 program in another school."

Another major difficulty that boards have in planning for a period of declining enrolments relates to population shifts that involve new housing developments, rezoning of residential to industrial districts, and the like. The schools may not necessarily be located in the growth areas where the pupils live. In Board #4, for example, the population is growing in one suburban area, leaving schools in the core area with more empty classrooms than the rate of decline in and of itself would have caused. Cost-conscious ratepayers look askance at school construction in one area of the board and school closures in another; their answer is to bus the kids to where the schools are. The parents, however, wail, "You're going to bus our children all the way back into the city?"

A similar problem is present in Board #8 where commercial rezoning has caused the closure of two city schools. Meanwhile, eleven of the schools on the periphery of the city have had to add portable classrooms. A major redevelopment project in one area of Board #9 caused a sharp decline in the French-language schools. In another area of the city, the board has had to

construct an English-language school and has also renovated a building as a French-language school, despite the impending closure of three schools in other parts of the city. In Board #2, INCO dropped 700 jobs in one community, causing extremely rapid declines in the school there. These are the kinds of population shifts that, accompanied by general decline in enrolment, make it extremely difficult for boards to cope.

The provision (or non-provision) of French-language instruction is an issue that may increase the rivalry between boards for pupils and that may result in enrolment shifts that exacerbate the effects of decline per se. Board #11 added a French immersion program at the same time that it altered its policy to admit non-Catholics. It attracted Anglo-Saxon students to the system from the public board and increased its enrolment by about 1%, helping to reduce the impact of declining enrolments. Their new intermediate school will be a French-language school as well, offering at least one year of French instruction at the secondary level. At the moment, there is no French-language secondary school in the area, so more students may shift from the public board.

With the current emphasis on French language instruction in the province, we can expect to see the introduction of more of these programs. With that provision will come a redistribution of students within and across boards and a redistribution of teaching positions, creating further reductions in force where teachers are unable to provide instruction in French. Board #2 has one area populated heavily by French-speaking people. Declining enrolments are impacting on the French-language secondary school there. At the moment, around 100 students from a neighbouring board are bused in to attend the school. The director stated that it would be "disastrous" if that board

decided to discontinue this practice. "We'd be in trouble for sure." Politically, it would be very difficult to close the school even if enrolment levels ever warranted closure.

Responding to community needs by the provision of programs such as French-language instruction, then, could help to alleviate decline (if students are attracted from other systems) or it could reduce a board's flexibility in adjusting the system to decline. The latter outcome could occur in cases where the enrolment shifts occur *within* a board, resulting in sharp declines in enrolment levels in English-language programs. At the same time, the French-language programs may experience increases but still not be large enough to generate reasonable per-pupil costs. Probably no area in Ontario to date has experienced the ramifications of this type of situation as has the Ottawa-Carleton Region.

There are many other kinds of challenges to boards in attempting to meet the needs of the particular students in their jurisdictions. Responding to these needs is never a simple matter, but declining enrolment makes the problem even more complex. Most of the urban boards, for example, have areas of high ethnic group concentration. Board #1 alone has some 48 to 50 distinct ethnic or linguistic groups across its jurisdiction. When these people are also New Canadians, the board feels constrained to provide special services such as English as a Second Language. Because of the varied linguistic abilities and educational backgrounds of these pupils, the schools ideally should have smaller pupil-teacher ratios and more specialized personnel. Such provision becomes extremely difficult given the budget cuts necessitated by declining enrolments across the system. Board #8, for example, has significant ethnic constituencies of Portuguese and Italian extraction. A

trustee argued that grants should take these factors into account because "these pupils have needs that are more expensive to meet, and we feel we have a very special obligation to them."

Communication with parents and assistance to parents who are immigrants is a related need that boards feel obligated to meet. Board #8 has one Portuguese community liaison officer who reportedly was doing a tremendous job but, with almost half of their pupils coming from the Azores, the board feels that it needs two or three more. "We have to put people in the field who can communicate with these people. There's also a genuine need for full-time social workers." If persons hired to perform these roles are non-certificated people, the trustee said that they would not come under the terms of some of the Ministry of Education programs. Thus the cost must be borne by the board. The obligation such boards feel is illustrated by the concern expressed by a trustee: "The person who has grown up here understands the institution and is prepared to deal with it, whereas the immigrant is in a different position altogether."

Socioeconomic factors in the community may also result in the need for boards to provide special (and costly) services that are even more difficult to provide in a period of decline. Around 65% of the residents in Board #11 receive some form of social assistance (welfare, unemployment, and the like) and there are numerous single-parent families. Because of their home situations and backgrounds, a relatively high proportion of the children have special problems, including the need for special education. Around 6% of the staff are employed full time in special education, while most boards reportedly have only 1 or 2%. The board has made a deliberate effort to reduce full-time special education classes for students and to integrate the

students into regular classes for part of the day. The weighting factors they receive, both from the unemployment rate in the community and for the special education program, are not in keeping with the costs and the impact of the problems.

Board #3 has responded to the special needs of some of its areas of low-income concentration by providing alternative schools to deal with the social adjustment problems of students and to place increased emphasis on business and technical programs. The heavy emphasis on the tourist industry in the county necessitated the introduction of specialized courses such as small engine repairs and restaurant services in the schools affected by this occupational pattern. These kinds of responses to specific community needs may be more difficult to maintain in an era of declining enrolments and revenues.

We referred earlier to the kinds of issues discussed in this section as "givens" that must be taken into account by boards affected by one or more of them in their planning for coping with decline. There are many other complicating factors over which boards have no control. These events have been likened by an anthropologist to the "acts of God" crises that agricultural society faced in the form of famines or floods. Trustees in Board #1 gave examples of the kinds of societal changes that might occur and that would dramatically alter board strategies based on projected rates of enrolment decline:

> What if all the Wasps left Quebec? What if there were a war? It happened in Vietnam; it has happened in Europe.
>
> What if our economy is destroyed? Will people still be able to support private schools?
>
> What if the country runs out of gasoline? If that happens, are people going to continue to live in Pickering, for example, or are they going to rent an apartment in the city?

While these kinds of possibilities are fairly extreme, they serve to illustrate that birth rates are not the only kind of societal trends that affect provisions of educational service. Public boards at least are aware of the enrolment projections for their jurisdictions over the next decade or so. Even if they do not dispute these projections, their plans and strategies must be flexible enough to respond to modifications in enrolment that stem from other factors. Board #1's planning department years ago had projected that there would be 110,000 pupils in the borough in 1976. The board actually had 96,378 enrolled. One trustee explained that there might actually be as many school-age children in the borough as the projection foresaw. Where are the extra children? "They're sitting in classrooms in Catholic schools, Jewish schools, and private schools." In short, the issue is not simply how many school-age pupils will there be, but also *where* are they going to be?

Community Pressures and Attitudes

Probably no "man-made" constraint will create as much difficulty for local boards, at a personal level at least, as will that of community pressures arising from attempts to close and consolidate schools. A director of education listed "intestinal fortitude" of trustees as one of three major problems in dealing with decline. He recalled a visit to another school system in which the officials were excited about a policy on school closure that the board had passed the night before. The visiting director recalled his reaction to them: "Yes, and just wait until the first crunch and they'll chicken out, policy or no policy."

The process of decision making regarding school closures was called by a trustee "the politics of declining enrolment at the local level." A board chairperson stated that it was very difficult to reach consensus with trustees representing different wards and different vested interests. "I don't know if we could take a hard position and say that we were going to close three schools, for instance, and get everybody to work towards that. It's very difficult." One trustee from an urban board believed that the government should not give weighting factors that encourage boards to retain small schools; he thought that boards should be forced to close these and go into more viable units. (It is not known whether or not the interviewee had ever been north of Highway 401.)

Trustees, in some cases, are unwilling to make politically volatile decisions unless the financial gains are substantial. In one board, for example, consideration was being given to closing some three-room schools. The officials presented both the educational and financial grounds for their recommendations, but the board only wanted to know how much money would be saved. When they were told the dollar savings could only be in the neighbourhood of $15,000 to $20,000 they responded, "No way. It's not worth the hassle." In another board, a trustee illustrated what is meant by the "hassle." The individual had been deluged by telephone calls from irate parents, culminating in a call from a lawyer who had been hired by a community group to fight the closing of their school.

Most often community pressures arise on the basis of protecting the neighbourhood school. "Protection" may come on the issue of school closures or on the issue of busing children from one school to another to equalize enrolments. One of the urban boards has a situation that could create that

kind of tension. Schools in one area of the board are bulging at the seams, while all other areas are experiencing decline. The crowded schools happen to be in a low-income area with numerous one-parent families, a variety of ethnic groups newly immigrated, and high rates of juvenile delinquency. The idea of busing some of these youngsters to less crowded schools was not considered for long:

> The consequences are just too painful, more than you can imagine. We run into all kinds of snobbery. The reaction is, "There's no way you're going to bus those poor kids into our school." Sometimes you can get away with busing poor kids if they're white, but if they're not white, you're in trouble.

The separate school boards have a different kind of political issue to consider in anticipating school closures. Their ratepayers have the option of switching their taxes and sending their children to the public schools. They might exercise that option if a neighbourhood separate school closes and a public school in the vicinity is still open. A trustee explained, "We only accentuate the problems of decline by closing a school if, in so doing, we lose our support base." When the public board closes a school, their ratepayers still have to pay school taxes. One separate board had been losing pupils at the time that they had large, widely dispersed schools. For the past decade they have deliberately moved to smaller schools close to the people, and their support base has widened. They will be very reluctant to risk the loss of support that might come with school consolidations.

From the interviews, we concluded that it will be extremely difficult for boards to obtain community support for the sharing of facilities between the public and separate systems. The chairperson of a separate school board was adamant that the board would not entertain any initiatives to share facilities with the public board. "The Catholic school board offers a unique educational

service, and to have the Catholic children sharing classrooms and desks with the children from the public board is quite an impossibility." Another separate school board has discussed buying or renting schools or sharing with the public board in its area. The public board reportedly would offer a school located where the separate board did not need space, or some schools they had abandoned because of age, or the top left corner of one building, or the like. The Ministry of Education was pressuring them to negotiate some sharing scheme, and it was a hot issue. They resisted.

This discussion provides evidence for the statement by a director that trustees and officials may be "tempted to delay unpleasant actions in the face of declining enrolments for fear of offending the staff or community." He said that there was no doubt that a decision or recommendation for school closure is undoubtedly accompanied by negative parental reaction, and he argued that boards must find a way to consolidate and still maintain parental support. "To adjust to reduced income, the system must operate fewer units. The pain of closing schools is less severe than the pain of having insufficient money to operate."

Staff and community place other pressures on boards that reduce their flexibility to consider alternative means of reducing costs. One of the pressures is to reduce central administration, often to a level seen as highly undesirable by the board. A trustee in a large urban system reflected the pressure from a good part of the staff and parents when he suggested closing the central administration building and renting it. Another trustee reacted,

> I don't know where he thought the people would go . . . . You see, people don't think of the scale when they hear decline. They don't think of the thousands of students we have. They think of saving their one school or their

> one job. And they look at "this damn building ruining my little school" and they want to get rid of it. I can understand it. I'd probably do the same [if I weren't a trustee].

The potential danger is there, according to this individual, for any board to dismantle its central staff to the degree where it can no longer run the system effectively. The trustees on this board recognized the importance of central staff during a teachers' strike. "Suddenly, they were in the board room alone; everyone else was out on the sidewalk. There were very few people who weren't in that union."

The average parents and teachers, we were told, get very aroused if the board adds senior staff, even if the position is established to implement something that they wanted. One board added an assistant superintendent of personnel to handle all the details of implementing clauses in the collective agreements. "That one has haunted us," explained a trustee, "but the need was there. And those same teachers who complained about it were the ones who scream loudest and longest if their files aren't up to date and they don't get their pay cheque adjusted."

Even trustees often lack a full understanding of the roles of consultants, coordinators, media people A-V technicians, and even secondary school department heads. Inverviewees admitted that it was very difficult "to get a handle on" those levels of administration. Many of the school-level positions exist by virtue of staffing formulae agreed to in collective bargaining or in letters of intent. The central office administrators are more vulnerable, yet it is these positions that trustees are able to defend from first-hand knowledge of the roles.

A third issue that generates community pressure is the failure to understand tax rates in a period of declining enrolments. A trustee stated

that local education taxes have escalated to the point of "arousing resentment bordering on alarm," and this is one of the hindering factors that boards face. Another trustee agreed that ratepayers are going to become more active. "You need only a few who are very vocal, and they soon have a following." In one board, the newspapers have questioned vigorously how the board can justify the costs of administration with declining enrolments. It is somewhat ironical that, as ratepayers become more vocal about issues such as administrative costs, they demand more and more of the time of school officials. Because the number of administrators has already been reduced, the remaining officials "don't have the nine hours to cope with this extra thing."

Public opinion appears to be a big factor in the eyes of most trustees, who obviously feel accountable to the ratepayers. As taxes rise, the ratepayer becomes more and more interested in three questions: (1) Why are my taxes going up when the school population is declining? (2) Why are my taxes going up when you're turning out a very poor product? (3) Why are my taxes going up when you're cutting back on services? In one board, a trustee stated that he saw it as healthy that local taxpayers are being given a greater responsibility for the cost of education. In another board, a trustee stated that ratepayers have always complained about the tax increases, even in years when there was no increase. The complaints, however, seem to be stronger now since the board has been forced to cut back services. It was suggested that ratepayers fail to put mill rate increases in perspective. "They think nothing of getting another thousand or two thousand dollars in salary per year, or paying more for groceries, rent, etc., but if we're talking about another fifteen dollars in local property taxes, they think it's terrible."

A trustee in one of the small boards asked rhetorically, "How can you cut services you don't have? We've never had full services anyway, just bits of service -- a music program here, something else there." The parents, however, claim that they had music, art, and other programs when they attended school in that system, and they cannot understand why their children do not have them. It is especially difficult for the community to understand the lack of services in the light of all the discussion regarding equality of educational opportunity that surrounded the original concept of reorganization of school boards in 1969. Some people feel that the gap is worse now than before because the board has had to reduce even its limited services. Yet taxes continue to rise.

One of the trustees made a plea for equality. The individual recalled a meeting of trustees in a medium-sized board. A band from one of the schools was brought in to entertain at dinner. The interviewee recalled thinking,

> We can't afford a band. Why can't our kids have that? Every separate school in Toronto has money available for a band. Is that equality? You feel bad. Every time I hear a school band play, I feel bad that the kids here can't have it. It hurts.

We heard in several boards that the public believes that teachers' salaries are too high, and this is another reason for their discontent with the costs of education at this time of declining enrolments. During the teachers' strike two years ago in one of the small boards, a public meeting was held to explain the teachers' positions. Parents wanted to know first what salaries the teachers were getting then, ignoring what the teachers were requesting. When this question was answered, the teachers lost all hope of gaining public backing. One trustee explained,

> Can you imagine what the miners and their wives felt? "My kids are out of school. We've never had a take-home pay like that. We don't get the increases and fringe benefits that teachers get."

These are the kinds of issues that make people aware of their tax bills. The average parent, according to trustees, wants to know, if teachers are making the money they are, why their children are not getting better services and programs.

Community pressures are changing in scope and intensity because of the growing numbers of ratepayers who are non-parents. Trustees pointed out that the least critical audience that schools have is an audience of parents and grandparents; they have been generally supportive because their children are happy. An individual commented,

> In the future, if we have a lot of couples who don't have children, they're not going to have grandchildren either. As they get older, they're going to wonder what the benefit is to them . . . . They resent the fact that they have to dig into the pocket and pay for education.

Those who disagree with this position argue that education is an integral part of our society and of our future. There are social benefits, and the whole system is based on the premise that all share in the costs. Stating that he would not want to pay on a user basis for education or any other societal service, one trustee gave an analogy. "I'd be reluctant to call the fire department because they'd charge me $10,000 to put out my garage fire."

One of the boards had called a liaison meeting with representatives from all levels of the system to discuss how they might reach the taxpaying non-parents and interest them in the education system. One of the reasons why this group of citizens becomes so irate at paying educational taxes, in

their opinion, is the fact that the municipality collects the tax and property tax is very visible. In contrast, citizens do not question the cost of community colleges because these tax monies do not come out on the property tax form so they are not visible to the ratepayer.

One final kind of community pressure was identified as a constraint to board decision making in dealing with decline. There are reportedly numerous very well organized and very vocal groups across the province who are concerned with a particular issue -- education of the gifted, special programs for exceptional children such as the learning disabled, and the like. Trustees noted that such groups view declining enrolments as a "golden opportunity" for the province, in cooperation with school boards, to mount programs that they feel are necessary for such children under the jurisdiction of a local board. "They feel that there's going to be staff available and accommodations available as classrooms and schools close." This kind of pressure, they believe, will become greater and greater.

In short, the public is looking for local school boards to reduce the costs of education, but they seem ill-prepared to accept board responses that impinge directly on them. In interview after interview, we were told that the typical parental view was, "You've got to do something about the costs, but whatever you do, don't affect my child." From teachers, it was "but don't affect my job." Where boards have actually tried to cut costs by closing schools, "there's often a violent reaction from the public." An administrator stated that we must somehow get people in the province prepared to accept closures as inevitable if costs are to be curbed effectively. "It's very difficult for boards to do this if a great political force builds up and marches on the board demanding that a school be kept open." Another interviewee summarized the feeling of many when he said, "One of the biggest needs may be for

the public to realize that we know there's a problem and we're working on it. We're not just sitting back saying that we'll simply ask them for more money."

Constraints from the Government and Its Ministry of Education

We have seen that local boards face many internal constraints in developing and implementing strategies to adjust to the impact of declining enrolments. In all our interviews with officials and trustees, nevertheless, the identification of constraints imposed by the government and its Ministry of Education generated the strongest feelings of frustration. The emotional reactions we received are summarized in the immediate response of a trustee to an interview question that asked, "Which factors are paramount in hindering the local school board from successfully coping with problems associated with declining enrolments?" The response was: "This is a bloody farce for the government to come out with [that] question, because they know damn well it's the financial restraints that's causing the difficulties." While the interviewee misunderstood that it was the study team, *not* the government, who had posed the question, his reaction was sincere.

Three major themes emerged from the interviews with regard to external constraints: financial restraints, programmatic expectations, and teacher legislation and regulations. The first of these, financial restraints, included a host of concerns, including the provincial share of educational costs, the timing of grant announcements, the absence of long-range planning in grant allocations, inadequacies in grants, the near-freeze on capital expenditures, and red tape and delays. Both the other two themes -- programmatic expectations and teacher legislation -- are related to financial concerns. The overarching message from all the discussions in this section is that the government has proceeded directly to reduce revenues in accord

with declining enrolments without being sensitive to the fact that local boards are not able to reduce expenditures in the same proportions immediately and, in some instances, even over a longer term.

Financial Restraints

Provincial Share of Costs. In most of the boards, concerns were expressed about the reduction in proportion of educational costs paid by the provincial government. The government, we were told, reduces the grants and expects the boards to go directly to the local property owners to recover the shortfall, when the boards cannot reduce costs accordingly. While grants also come from taxpayers' pockets, the tax monies are collected from most residents. When a local board has to collect additional revenues through increases in mill rates, monies come only from one segment of society, the property owner. Provincial sales taxes are also less visible than are property taxes.

The provincial support of education has gone up and down, according to our interviewees, but has been reduced some 10% since 1972. In one board, the municipality was requisitioned for around four million dollars in 1972, compared to eight million dollars this past year. A very small shift may mean a million dollars to a particular board. "That has an incredible impact . . . because that's shifted right over to the ratepayers." One of the problems is that municipal governments seem not to understand the problems of the school system. As one interviewee stated, "They have taken advantage of the situation for their own political needs and, as far as I can see, municipalities are being favored over education."

If provincial support continues to be reduced, a trustee remarked that "it may exacerbate the declining enrolment situation as far as school staff is concerned." The level of educational services, he argued, will have to

be reduced. The reduction, furthermore, cannot continue to come at the expense of building maintenance, consumable supplies for classrooms, and support services. As pressures come forth from local ratepayers, boards may be faced with decisions about their abilities to maintain a "luxury" education system. The trustee in this case concluded that we were providing luxury education compared to the provision ten years ago when county boards were formed. Reducing services will mean a re-thinking of priorities and a different kind of accountability to local property owners. Ultimately, it will mean further reductions in staff. "It's going to be tough."

The type of impact that reduction in provincial support has varies across boards. In one of the very small boards, for example, we were told that they could generate only a very few dollars by raising local taxes. "Now that the inflation in teachers' salaries has put us over the ceilings, we're up against it." Increasing the mill rate will not solve their problem since the local tax base is small and is, itself, declining. "The population of this town is declining, not just the school population; it's a stagnant area." Another of the small boards had the lowest per-pupil assessment in the province, something like $8,000 or so per pupil, compared with the provincial average of $55,000. One interviewee said that, when an extra mill is levied in Toronto, it generates perhaps $20,000,000 to $50,000,000; in their board, it would mean perhaps $3,000. This community also has seen a reduction in the local tax base with the closing of two major industries. While provincial grants are weighted in favor of boards with smaller assessment bases, our interviewees do not feel these are adequate.

Another special case is that of the separate school boards. In one of these, we were told that the board relies on grants for 75% of their revenue.

Since grants are annual decisions of the Cabinet, a slight shift, the moving of a decimal point, has serious implications for them. The tax base is quite small compared with that of the public board of education, so grant regulations are extremely important. Another of the separate boards reportedly receives one-sixth of the revenue that the area's public board does, although they do not have only one-sixth as many pupils. Some of the discrepancy has come from the differential basis for separate school support, which has recently been revised (see discussion below). Both these boards are now over ceiling in expenditures.

Timing of Grant Decisions; Need for Long-Range Planning. Over and over, we heard complaints about the timing of decisions regarding provincial grants to schools. A related problem is the fact that the fiscal year does not correspond with the school year. The school operates from September to August; the fiscal year is from January to December. Local boards typically prepare budgets in early spring (March-May), but they do not receive the grant information until as late as January. There is no specific date for the release of grant information. Local boards have already committed over 60% of the anticipated revenues for the fiscal year by the time that the fiscal year actually begins. Staffing is based on the previous September, not on the upcoming September. The results in one board are exemplary:

> What can you do in 40% of a year? If you had to chop off, like we did in 1976, a quarter of a million dollars from your budget, and you only had 40% of the year to do it in, you can imagine where you'd scramble. Areas such as plant maintenance went down to nil . . . . When something breaks, we repair it, but it's not planned. And we hope for the best . . . . I'm sure the staffing in schools has taken quite a blunt of it . . . . I find the Ministry's dealings with declining enrolments is very unfair because of the commitment we have of 60% each year, over which we have no control.

In short, the only portion of a board's budget that can be drastically altered after grants announcements are made is that covering the period September-December of the next school year. Further, the board must begin to plan the program for that fall early in the preceding school year, again before the board knows how much revenue it will receive from the provincial government. Contracts with teachers are negotiated and collective agreements are made often prior to the grant information. Timing, then, is extremely important to local boards. It is especially frustrating when boards are trying to respond to declining enrolments through long-range planning.

Under the existing situation, local boards and administrators are caught in an embarrassing predicament. When they must absorb budget cuts in a four-month period of time, it appears to local taxpayers that they have not engaged in planning. "Taxpayers don't understand that; it's a very difficult thing to explain." The same point carries down to the school level. The school principal cannot plan on purchasing typewriters this year, for example. "You're well into the year before you can make decisions." A trustee observed that this situation was very subtle; the principal's inability to plan school program and equipment is seen by his teaching staff as indicative of something wrong with his administration. "In the same way that we have trouble explaining to the municipalities, the principal has trouble explaining to the troops. They get a little tired of hearing the same thing." The effective planning time of the principal, just as of the board, is very, very short. A trustee concluded, "In a large business, it just wouldn't be tolerated, and yet we have to put up with it."

Commonly, trustees and officials bemoan the lack of long-range planning and fiscal commitment from the government. As one interviewee saw it, "Even

if they promised us a consistent percentage for four or five years, we could do our own planning more realistically." We have seen that slight shifts in grant allocations impact heavily on some boards; the so-called "bombs" hit them all. An official explained:

> If local school boards knew where the Ministry was going, it would be awfully damn helpful. Like this thing that McKeough did to us, dropping a bomb of superannuation, a hundred million bucks being taken out of the total educational pool as opposed to the total general budget of the province. If that sort of thing had been phased in, and we knew where they were going, boards could plan much more effectively and could meet some of these problems.
>
> Now I've heard the same old garbage from the politicians again and again: "You can't plan beyond one year at a political level or a government level." I just don't believe that. I think all it takes is a little bit of commitment on the part of a government to say, "Hey, here's where we seem to be going within the mandate of the years we have, even with a minority government." It's going to take an awful lot of guts on the part of a new government coming in to make that kind of change.

The official believes that, if the government did make some long-range plans and commitments, the majority of the community would live with them.

> Politicians think we don't have enough guts to pull our belt buckle in. I think they tend to underestimate what the Canadian citizen at the federal level and what the Ontario citizen or local citizen is capable of doing in the way of living within things. All we do is listen to this scrambling minority here or this one over here saying, "We've got to have this or that." And I just happen to believe that the best thing that could happen for local boards and administrators is to give us some kind of long-term direction.

Most boards agreed that one of the most pressing needs they face is some kind of long-term commitment from the province, both in terms of grant regulations and in terms of the rate of provincial support for educational costs. If these commitments were made, local board planning would be enhanced enormously. One alternative would be for the government to adjust the tying

of provincial grants to enrolment over a longer period of time rather than from year to year. Another alternative would be for the government to entertain five-year plans from local boards and allow some flexible financing for those boards. This would serve as an incentive for boards to engage in long-range planning. It would also mean that "the crunch doesn't hit us all at once; we would have some leeway in terms of solving the problem [of declining enrolments]."

Grant Inadequacies in a Period of Decline. Many times we were told by interviewees that the government, being aware that declining enrolments were approaching, had instituted a system of off-setting grants to assist boards in combating the impact. These grants were "deliberately removed two or three years ago; it's the government who is putting the screws to the school boards." The removal of the off-setting grants was viewed as "an absolute disaster because you can't gear down as fast as the enrolment declines." One official explained,

> We are over ceiling now on both elementary and secondary, and there's no way of getting out of it. Say there was one pupil less in each class across the system. We'd have about 170 fewer students, but we couldn't lay off even one teacher, and we'd lose $170,000 in grants. You need lead time to consolidate classes and close schools. We've closed two schools already and we're closing two more this year. But even that doesn't catch up with declining enrolment.

Trustees stated that boards need an immediate re-institution of the off-setting grants for declining enrolments. While local members of Parliament are sympathetic, trustees told us that "You've got to get to McKeough or Wells or Davis to get this rectified." Boards feel strongly that grants should not be based on enrolments in any one year, but rather on some recognition of fixed costs and on patterns across several years. A repetitive

theme was, "You can't gear down as fast as the enrolment is declining." The only answer to coping with decline seems to be school consolidation and closing. Staff lay-offs will help, but if schools are not closed, the maintenance and operating costs "keep right on going." When enrolment declines 3%, Ministry grants decrease 3%, but the local board is not able to reduce its costs by 3% in that year.

In discussing alternatives, it was suggested that the government consider fixed costs by making some weighting based upon space or square footage of buildings. It was recognized that this strategy might tempt a board to keep buildings available when they should not do so, but it was argued that there should be *some* modification to the total dependence on enrolments as grant criteria. One trustee suggested an incentive be provided "to cause the board to take action to close a school, to provide a better educational organization, and to reduce the costs."

The allowance for small schools is, of course, critical for small boards and for those with relatively isolated rural areas. We have seen that such boards often are faced with difficulties in attempting to provide equality of educational opportunity in the best of times. With declining enrolments, the problems are even greater. Thus trustees in one of these boards suggested that grant allocations should be provided on the basis of some definition of a minimally-acceptable program.

> We don't want to sound like cry-babies, but another factor is the failure of the Ministry to establish a floor for services and to pay to operate it. We talk about equality: some are more equal than others. There should be a floor that says, "All right, now in special education, here's what you need. Or in music and art." Establish a minimum standard -- "Regardless of size the board shall have . . . ." If there are extra costs, "We'll pick them up." The Ministry has failed to establish this type of minimum standards . . . . The Ministry of Health offers basic services in a community regardless of the size of the community. Why doesn't th Ministry of Education do that?

A final inadequacy in present grant regulations that was reported to constrain board efforts to deal with decline pertains to the separate school boards. This restriction arose from the policy (in effect at the time of the interviews) that separate grants were calculated only on elementary level provisions. Where the board offers a program for grades 9 and 10 students, the grants did not recognize the higher costs of these programs. Decline starts at the lower grades, and for a period of time, there will be proportionately more children in grades 9 and 10. As one official stated,

> Your base is going to be squeezed. As our elementary enrolment has been going down, our grades 9 and 10 enrolment has been going up. We've tried to explain to the government that the costs of operating programs at that level are higher. This difference in costs isn't totally a choice on our part because the style in which the school operates is governed to a fair extent by traditions that exist in the province -- traditions that have been fairly well either encouraged or nurtured or created by the Ministry itself and by the government itself.

This situation reportedly put the separate board at a "fantastic disadvantage because our people are concerned about the inequity that exists." The parents had difficulty in understanding why the grades 9 and 10 students were being discriminated against in a fairly large system. The separate boards, trustees argue, would be able to attract more students if they had grant equity with public boards. "The basic problem is discrimination." In one separate board, it was noted that the ethnic constituencies are becoming more aware of the discrimination, and it was expected that political repercussions along those lines would soon be felt.

It must be noted that, after the interviews were completed, the Ministry of Education announced changes in grant policies. Funding for pupils in grades 9 and 10 in Roman Catholic separate schools was to be increased.

Grants were also to be increased for programs in special education, French-language instruction, and for the teaching of English to New Canadians. We are unable to judge whether or not many of the problems identified by interviewees will be met satisfactorily by these revisions to the grant policies. Nevertheless, the new policies reflect at least a recognition by the government of many of the issues raised in this chapter.

Inadequacies in Capital Expenditure Policy and Procedures. Just as trustees and officials feel that the government has been insensitive in dealing with grants for operating expenditures, so too are they critical of the government's policies with regard to capital and extraordinary expenses. While there are some commonalities in their complaints, there is diversity as well. The diversity is an indicator that the policies are not perceived to be flexible enough to apply to the differing needs of boards in a period of decline.

The most common area of concern was the inability of local boards to finance modifications to school accommodations in order to facilitate school consolidation. In one specific example, the board had decided to combine two secondary schools in one building because it was becoming too expensive to operate the two small schools. In order to make the consolidation, one of the schools had to be converted to another type of unit -- "which is fairly capital intensive." In another system, one school was closed, but the board could not gain Ministry approval to bring the other school "up to scratch." They felt their rationale was reasonable: they would save dollars but also enhance opportunities for the children concerned. One interviewee concluded:

> I think the Ministry should look at that in the individual context. We're not trying to snow anybody . . . . Really, we close a school and there's not much to be gained by going to the other school because they still don't have the variety of services.

Other boards may need either extensive renovations to older buildings or new schools, despite declining enrolments. In one case, we were told, "We have several old schools that I'd frankly consider complete fire traps that should be demolished. You can go to new schools or renovate old ones, but not without hitting the taxpayer between the eyes." It was concluded that the allocation of capital monies and money for renovations does not take into consideration the great variance in boards. If boards with many old schools could renovate some of them, consolidation could "go on much more sensibly and not have as dramatic an effect on programs."

We have seen, in an earlier section of this chapter, that community reactions to school consolidation and closure are major stumbling blocks for boards. The perceived near-freeze on expenditures for renovation or building does not provide any assistance to boards in overcoming negative reactions. There seems to be rare flexibility for dealing with individual cases, even in areas where overall enrolment decline is accompanied with shifts of school population to newly-developed areas (the issue of unevenness of decline). As one trustee put it,

> We also have to admit that the ministry has looked down from above with a bird's eye view and hasn't shown a heck of a lot of concern about location. They've said, "There's an empty room, there's an empty room, and there's an empty room. You need a new school?"

A very different kind of dilemma is faced by boards that had undergone massive building programs over the past decade. We were told that the

government has a weighting factor for older buildings and used to take into account extraordinary expenses for debenture charges. The latter reportedly has been reduced. It has reportedly cost one of the separate boards about a quarter of a million dollars per year. "And we can't control that because we have to pay the debenture debt; we can't stop paying the mortgage." The revenue was removed just as decline hit this board. The result is that a large portion of their annual income goes into the retirement of the debt and there is less left to spend on other services. Boards with older buildings, they argue, are also in a better position politically to close schools. "We're in a different position. We might be faced in many cases with the abandonment of buildings that still have most of their debenture debt riding on them."

Even in the few cases where boards have been able to gain Ministry approval for building or renovation, the red tape and delays encountered have been counter-productive. In one system, the board had to "follow political routes to convince the Ministry" to invest some money in their amalgamation and renovation plan. It took them two years to get the $500,000 they needed. A trustee commented,

> It was time-consuming, just convincing a man with a few phones to get unfrozen and the like . . . . Even up until as recently as six weeks ago, we were having some difficulty. We had the approval originally, and then it was withdrawn, and that kind of thing.

One board had tried to sell a secondary school, we were told, and the effort required three years because of governmental delays. "It was because we had to go through all of these levels of jurisdiction, and each of them takes months to reply to you about something." In the meantime, the board had to pay the costs of heating, maintenance, and repairs (e.g., broken windows). At one point, the board went to the Ministry and said, "Hey, this delay cost us

X thousands of dollars. We should get this out of your shirt." The Ministry, of course, turned a deaf ear.

Programmatic Expectations

Local boards have spent enormous energy to date discussing school consolidations and closures as a means of coping with the impact of decline. An issue discussed with less frequency perhaps was that of meeting expectations for educational programs and services in a period of decline. This issue is very much on the minds of officials and trustees, but they have not yet begun to deal with it systematically. Indeed, it appears that the government and its Ministry of Education also have not given adequate attention to the implications of decline on the expectations *they* set for schools. A director identified this oversight: "Provincial politicians are caught like the local ones with the greatest problem that faces us with decline and financial restraints: the level of expectation has been brought out of sight by provincial statements and provincial policy."

In the discussion that follows, we shall see that boards are caught in the middle between still-rising expectations and declining revenues. In some cases, the expectations are accompanied by incentive grants -- "come-on's," as one interviewee saw them -- and, in other cases, they are a part of general provincial guidelines that all schools are mandated to implement. The Ministry of Education is perceived as having made no long-range commitments either to its "incentive" programs or to its curriculum guidelines, placing boards in an untenable position.

The views differed, but the end plea for a re-thinking and a long-range commitment was common. These remarks of two directors of education (in large boards) were illustrative:

> The best thing that could happen for school boards and for administrators is to give us some kind of long-term direction. Can you think of anything really more stupid, as an educator, than to think that, in our secondary schools right now, we have kids operating on four different program plans in terms of getting their diploma. And when are we ever going to let the school kind of settle in and try to do things for the kids on a reasonable basis for a period of time?
>
> This is going to catch us in five years. I think there has got to be a revision in H.S.1. We're not going to be able to offer all the myriad of programs, at least under the present grant structure.

Our interview data reveal that local boards do not welcome the Ministry of Education's practice of offering incentive grants for the introduction of special programs with open arms. As one interviewee put it, "the Ministry has a propensity for getting their kicks out of programs that are costly locally." The usual practice seems to be to offer a grant at the time of introduction and then to remove the assistance once the program is established (and public expectation for its continuance is also established). In one board, trustees said that they had been "burned once or twice, so we're taking a darned good look at it." They do not want to deny their pupils something that the rest of the province may be able to take advantage of "because they happen to have better funding or a better tax situation than we do."

The withdrawal of grants to special programs has created public relations problems for local boards in a period of declining revenues. One trustee explained that his board was now going to have to start withdrawing services introduced when incentive grants were available. "It's the local jurisdiction that winds up with egg on their faces. It's those grants that hurt." This kind of feeling was predominant among the interviewees in our study.

We were told that one of the boards had taken advantage of the Ministry's double funding for French-language schools. This year, one of the funding sources was removed, and the board was faced with serious financial problems. "There is a chance that we may now have to reduce oral French programs." Spokesmen in another board had had similar experiences and had concluded that incentive grants signal policy directions and provincial determination of objectives. Once these are implemented, the dollars are withdrawn. "All of a sudden, we re-discover autonomy and say, 'Let the local board do that.'"

A particular form of incentive grant, albeit on a longer-term scale, is in the area of special education. Here, too, there is concern about the government's dictation to boards not only of objectives but of the organizational means to meet them. At present the grants reportedly operate on a philosophy of segregation -- segregation of children, special classes, special teachers. There has been an incentive, then, for boards to organize special education on this basis. We were told of one secondary school with 26 court-home pupils. Because they were not in a separate class, "the weighting factor was right out of the picture."

Many boards have adopted what is the prevailing philosophy of special education today -- one of integration of special education students in regular schools and classrooms. Some officials expect Ontario legislation soon, similar to that in the United States, that every child is entitled to an education in a regular classroom. Passage of such legislation would change the incentive dramatically, in an implementation sense.

Regardless of the basis for funding, the grants for special education reportedly are not in keeping with the demands. Changes in other ministries have had an impact here; it is not merely one of more realistic identification

of pupils needing assistance. One change is the shift of young people from correctional institutions to the public schools. Interviewees in one board explained:

> The education system is being asked to assume responsibilities that it never ever had to assume in the past, in terms of the changes in the correctional institutions, in the lesiglation governing them, in the Community and Social Services Ministry. I find there's a tremendous concern on the part of parents, the local judiciary, and the probation people about how we are handling the education of those kids, some of whom would have been in a training school . . . . My gosh, you can't just dump on others your responsibility.

This shift has had tremendous social implications on the school. The attendance counsellor reportedly has been asked by the court to assume the responsibilities of a probation officer, in addition to his other duties. The school may have to add staff to look after such situations. An official added, "I know certain ministries are sitting on money that they're not quite sure what to do with, while the people now being taken up by the schools present a tremendous burden on our staff." These same ministries formerly spent around $22,000 per year on students in training schools. The schools not only absorb the cost of education, but often must train staff to assume responsibilities that once were under the jurisdiction of training schools. The school is attempting at least to coordinate its efforts with that of the social services in its community.

The Ministry of Education has reduced the number of its regional offices and has changed their function to focus more upon monitoring than upon services to local boards. These changes have affected at least the small northern boards in a negative way. The need was expressed for consultative services in areas where "we lack local expertise in a small system." Interviewees said that they had given fairly strong support to the regional office

concept in a study a few years ago, but they guessed that larger boards had not done so. Their needs are even greater in a period of decline:

> The smaller your enrolment, the smaller your resources and finances, and the more assistance you require. And we do get into the details of that. We've had to reduce our body of people that work in special fields because we just can't afford that complement we're talking about.

Trustees in this small northern board were of the opinion that the reduction in consultative services in the regional office had affected all their programs. They believed that the cost of the regional offices had been ill-spent in the past because the offices were not used to the best advantage of the local boards. The offices reportedly had not been decision-making bodies, which has been a detriment. As long as they provided consultants, however, the offices were useful at least to the small boards. Trustees are very critical now that regional office resources are used in non-supportive ways. The board had sought assistance in reviewing their business operations, for example, and finally had to turn to OISE for the expertise they needed.

Teacher Legislation and Regulations

Local boards must share the blame in having negotiated teacher salary levels that are perceived by large numbers of taxpayers as too high, and they have been party to collective agreements covering redundancy clauses, seniority clauses, and workload clauses. Nevertheless, most of the trustees we interviewed saw themselves as having been "thrown to the wolves," unable to withstand the pressures from teacher federations at the bargaining table. Bill 100, they argued, not only lacks management rights but also opens up the negotiations process to all kinds of teacher demands. Most seemed to agree that legislation is needed to guarantee management rights, more than

ever at a time of declining enrolments and the need to reduce staff. The confrontation was described by one interviewee in this way:

> Federations are significantly concerned with maintaining and protecting positions at a time of enrolment decline. Boards are confronted with escalating costs and diminishing revenue and must attempt to reduce costs in staffing as one means of keeping mill rates acceptable to taxpayers. In areas of policy development to adjust to declining enrolments, therefore, federations and boards tend to pull in different directions.

Bill 100 appears to favor teachers in this conflict in directions, in the eyes of many of our interviewees. For example, since the government could have anticipated that the legislation would open the door to a negotiated pupil-teacher ratio or class size, the bill might better have included a provincial ratio. Bill 100 reportedly provides a process whereby mediators or fact-finders, who are not knowledgeable of the total educational system, or who are dealing with a particular problem at a particular time, award a pupil-teacher ratio or something else. As one trustee said, "Their decision may solve a problem for today, but it creates them for tomorrow." Decisions, in short, are made out of context and may saddle a board for two decades. In at least one board, the Education Relations Commission was viewed as having vested interests as well.

A few boards feel that they have already backed themselves into a corner with collective agreements that will make it extremely difficult to deal with declining enrolments by reducing staff. One trustee commented, "The way some of our contracts read now, our secondary teachers are literally on staff until the day they die; we may have to keep them at least on permanent supply." Clauses resulting from the external mediator under Bill 100 mean "we're carrying a lot of people that we won't be able to afford in decreased enrolment, and they won't be the right people at the right time." A director of education

said that he did not mean "to shaft the teachers because we'd get an attitude in our schools that would really hurt the kids." Nevertheless, he believed that legislation must keep up with the kinds of needs we are going to have. In his view,

> We need a legislation process that says, "We're going to have a problem with our contracts someplace down the line. Let's look at how legislation could change to meet that." Instead, here we're smack into it, and confrontation is the means of resolving it.

Another area of discontent for local boards is the impact of improved teacher qualifications in an age of declining enrolments. In this area, which includes government regulations regarding certification, the decisions taken during a period of expansion restrain the ability of local boards to reduce costs. Teacher costs are the major item in a board budget. With the improvement in teacher qualifications, the boards still have to pay the higher costs despite decline. A director of education summarized the financial dilemma and the public relations problems thus created:

> We have had schools all these years, and there were very few people with this much education [a B.A. plus teachers' college]. Today that's the minimum standard to become a teacher . . . . When teachers retire, you replace them with a higher-priced person, right from teachers' college . . . . So here you are, this additional cost -- now are we getting our money's worth? This is what the taxpayers are asking . . . . The teachers are still getting their M.A.'s too and staying in jobs longer.

The government seems to be concerned with its own public relations image, according to another director, but its decisions sometimes create problems for boards. For example, a director spoke of the government's announcement that they were going to pay an extra $80 per elementary student to narrow the gap between elementary and secondary per-pupil expenditures. His reaction

was, "Like hell you're narrowing the gap; you're just barely keeping up with the cost caused by improved qualifications." He was very critical of the government's upgrading of teacher qualifications when they realized "everything is phasing out." The director was not opposed to better qualified teachers. He merely wanted those qualifications reflected and stated in provincial support for educational costs.

Separate school boards have additional problems. First, they must compete with salary levels negotiated by public boards. A trustee stated that his board was falling behind in both teaching and non-instructional staff salary levels, as compared to the area's public board. The board fears they will lose good staff. A second problem is faced by separate boards in offering grades 9 and 10. Their teachers are as qualified as public secondary school teachers, and they demand similar salaries. The board has not been able to pay these salary levels because their grant had been based only upon elementary pupil costs, and there is still a significant gap between elementary and secondary grants. "If the government ever relented and sort of cut down this difference, without recognizing declining enrolment, we could probably survive," according to a trustee. As noted, the government has recently changed this provision to separate school boards.

There were several kinds of restraints identified that stemmed, directly or indirectly, from government regulations related to teaching staff. A trustee summarized the gist of these problems: "There isn't any flexibility; those regulations all seem to have been drawn up for increasing systems." For example, it is quite difficult for boards to release teachers seen as incompetent or, more generally, as mediocre. In a period of expansion, an inadequate teacher could be "moved around." Teachers are encouraged to go to

boards of reference, and this complicated process discourages principals and officials from getting involved in the established procedure for teacher dismissal.

A director of education recalled the years of "chasing bodies into the school system." Boards, he said, made fairly frequent compromises in hiring and retention of staff, people who would not have been hired today. When he sees the very capable young teachers he is unable to employ today, and then looks at the "mediocre" examples among his tenured teachers, his reaction is: "Good God . . . I look back and say '*mea culpa*.' I have been guilty so many times, too." A trustee commented that one can review records, find barely good reviews, and now, twenty years later, "are we going to say we didn't mean all of that?" These teachers are resigning less and less because of the pressure of declining enrolment. If they leave, they realize they cannot return. A director of education suggested that the concept of seniority could become an interesting strike issue. His board has started a five-year program of teacher evaluation, with the idea of "making sure that only the best teachers remain." The federations are not expected to react passively to this program.

Existing teacher regulations make it very difficult for local boards to employ or to retain young teachers. Sometimes, the certification or qualifications required for particular positions is the problem. For example, interviewees in one board argued that the Ministry of Education should reduce the restrictions on teachers for French-language programs. The director gave this illustration:

> When I started teaching, I had to teach music, and I can't carry a tune. But once a week, a music supervisor came around and told me what to do for the next

> week. O.K. — we speculate that anyone with grade 13 French should, with some boning up, be able to master 40 words, which should be almost sufficient to keep kids in grade 1 interested as an introduction to French. Once a week, a French supervisor could give them four more words and a little song. What it would amount to is we wouldn't be firing Anglophone teachers . . . . We may just do this without the Minister's blessing.

Another stumbling-block to staffing flexibility is that the regulations seem not to permit term appointments for supervisory officers. Just as with teachers, the emphasis is upon "paper qualifications" rather than skills. At the teacher level, we were told that regulations do not allow a board to hire new teacher education graduates for "different kinds of jobs at a lower salary, like a paraprofessional. They might welcome these to become aware of how systems work, if regulations would allow it." Trustees generally seem genuinely desirous of regulations that would provide means of getting new people into the teaching ranks. To allow these young people to abandon their hopes of entering the profession would be "a tremendous loss and will appear in a very few years." It is the younger people, trustees argue, who are eager to assist in extra-curricular programs and the like.

Interviewees in one board stated they feel like they are "playing games" by having to operate under present staffing restrictions. They have worked out an understanding with their affiliates so that they can hire teachers for one year. "The problem is that we can't bring a person in for a full year and really be abiding by the regulations." When teachers are hired for part-time jobs, one of the problems is that this does not qualify them toward permanent certification. A director stated, "I think you're going to have to take a very serious look at how beginning teachers can come into part-time positions or occasional positions and get credit toward a permanent teaching

certificate." The existing situation is very "traumatic" for beginning teachers who have only five years in which to gain permanent certification. In short, the regulations do not permit adequate flexibility, and flexibility is essential in a period of declining enrolments.

Summary

This chapter has addressed the internal and external restraints faced by boards in adjusting to declining enrolments and reduced revenues. The first section discussed the constraints due to internal issues or pressures that must be satisfied or taken into account in planning the adjustments needed to cope with declining enrolments. These included several characteristics of particular board communities that limit flexibility in reducing educational costs -- geographical factors, population mobility and unevenness of decline, high ethnic group concentration, socioeconomic factors, and the combination that obliges boards to offer special programs or staffing formulae to meet needs.

The examination of community pressures and attitudes included discussion of the resistance to school closures and consolidation, the pressure to reduce central administration, the failure to understand tax rates in a period of declining enrolments, and the emergence of groups who believe school boards can now provide new and improved special programs or services. As this chapter was written, a page of the Toronto Star (March 18, 1978) was devoted to describing the efforts of one couple to fight school closures in the North York Board of Education, a task that has engaged their energies on almost a full-time basis. The husband stated, "Four years ago we were not politically

involved people. We feel like we're innocents caught up in something we can't get out of." The paper suggests that many more parents will find themselves in the same position. The same dilemma, moreover, might describe the local trustees who are also caught up in a counter-effort "we can't get out of."

In examining the restraints imposed by the government and its Ministry of Education on local boards, we discussed a variety of financial concerns -- the provincial share of educational costs, the timing of grant announcements, the absence of long-range financial planning and commitment on the part of the government, inadequacies in grant formulae in a period of decline, the lack of flexibility in governmental provisions for capital and extraordinary expenditures, and bureaucratic delays. Restraints imposed by governmental expectations for school program and by legislation and regulations pertaining to teachers were also identified and described. All the externally-derived restraints can be summarized by the frustration evident in this statement by a trustee: "Do-re-mi is the essence of all our complaints."

A large number of the interviewees in our study seem willing to shift the blame for their problems in coping with decline to the provincial government. While this is an expected response, we believe that there is a basic issue underlying the concerns of educational financing in a period of decline, an issue that is larger and more fundamental than that of simply providing more revenue. This issue is the definition of education itself. Local boards seem still to be attempting to provide educational services that have been emphasized as important during the "golden age of education." Provincial documents seem also still to reflect these expectations, although the money is not made available to fund the necessary programs and services.

During the era of educational expansion, an attempt was made to define educational aims and objectives through a Royal Commission study. It is perhaps noteworthy that the Hall-Dennis report never adequately defined aims and objectives. Perhaps this omission was less important when revenues were plentiful. Today it is essential that provincial grants and board budgets reflect a commonly-accepted definition of educational services. Our study team questions whether the Commission on Declining Enrolments will fill this void. Until considered and rigorous attention is paid to defining educational ends, debate about alternative provisions of "means" to ill-defined ends will be inconclusive.

CHAPTER V

COPING WITH DECLINE: ALTERNATIVE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

At the outset of this investigation, the researchers anticipated the discovery of one or two magic models that would provide definitive guidelines for the management of decline. Perhaps some innovative school district, through a combination of creative effort and intense dedication, would have established the most effective pattern for dealing with decline. Perhaps some scholar or consultant either here or in some other jurisdiction would have applied his mind to the design of a system that would overcome all problems in declining organizations.

The magic solution has not been found. The definitive organizational model has not been developed. In fact, the conclusion is that there is a situation, declining enrolments, which has spawned a myriad of problems. These problems are not discrete in their relationship to decline. Although the nature of financial problems faced by school systems is related to the sharp decline in enrolments, the general economic problems in the province and in the country are also factors. Questions about the appropriate administrative structure of school boards in Ontario in a period of decline do not differ too much from questions asked during a period of expansion. What has happened

as a result of the rather sudden realization of shifting population patterns is a sharpening and a quickening of concern about educational reform and about organizational renewal within the social context. Decline also is more frightening to individuals and to systems than is expansion since the consequences of failure to cope with long-standing problems are more serious, involving in some cases threats to individuals in terms of their ability to survive and in other cases the possibility of the demise of current organizational arrangements that are familiar and understood by those involved. Thus there is a sense of urgency about educational governance and about appropriate organizational relationships and stances relative to a variety of problems. The new language is the language of decline. The problems, in a sense, are long-standing organizational problems, shaped by the new situation and the new language.

The previous chapters in this report have identified current organizational patterns in a sample of Ontario school systems and have described current policies and strategies for dealing with declining school populations. These policies and strategies, as discussed in Chapter III, are struggling, in a sense, to be born in the face of a number of constraints, both internal to the system and external in terms of community and governmental pressures. In this chapter, a number of problem areas identified previously are discussed in terms of emerging patterns. For the most part, these emergent patterns are developing slowly from current practices and do not appear to be dramatic. In a few instances, we have found a cluster of ideas from our respondents that suggest the need for a fundamental change in structural relationships among the relevant constituencies concerned with education in the province.

In discussing these problem areas and in suggesting approaches to the solution of the problems, we note that the intent is to provide possible

alternatives and directions. The decision of appropriate directions ought to be as rational as possible, but in the end it is political, the result of hard bargaining on the part of those responsible both for the allocation of scarce resources and the implementation of allocation decisions.

Patterns of Organization and Administration

Organizational structure refers to the patterns of relationships among individuals and groups within the system. In Ontario, school systems are bureaucratic in nature, with a hierarchy of positions at the administrative level ranging from chief executive officer to school administrators at the principal, vice-principal, and, possibly, department chairperson level. In addition, there are a number of quasi-administrative personnel in school districts such as coordinators, consultants, and ancillary personnel of various kinds. Most school districts organize for decision making and control through a series of interlocking committees or groups whose members are drawn from various levels in the hierarchy. While power tends to be unevenly distributed, with the locus toward the top of the hierarchy, the constraints brought about by government restrictions, the notion of participatory decision making, and the activity of ancillary groups such as the teacher unions diffuse the ability of any one individual or group within the system to bring about change or to control.

One of the perennial questions facing school boards is the matter of central office complement. How many superintendents should there be? How many consultants? How large should the business office component be? The advent of declining enrolments has intensified the concern with this question.

The visibility of the administrative component, the relatively high salaries paid to administrators, and the remoteness, in the eyes of the general public, of administrators from direct interaction with children, has resulted in attacks in the media and by individuals, calling for reduction in the administrative complement, and even, in one notable case, a suggestion that the central administrative office be closed in order to save money.

The response of school boards and chief executives to the situation is documented in Chapter III. Since the advent of serious decline, many school boards have reduced their administrative components at the executive level, and as far as we can tell at the coordinative and consultative level. Can this trend continue? And to what extent can central staffs be further reduced without hurting the educational programs of the school system? We have no definitive answer to this, and probably there is no definitive answer, but we do have some suggestions, based on thinking from respondents in the school systems and from examination of literature in this area.

While admitting there is no magic formula for the central office component, there is the possibility of informed decisions based on information. A school board ought to have available systematic data about the central office components of all school boards across the province. At present, there are no such data available in a form which would permit reasonable comparison. *An appropriate use of resources would be to commission a study of administrative structures across the province whereby the patterns according to categories of systems would be known.* Appropriate factors that might condition the size of the administrative component include size of system, geography, sparsity, ethnic configurations, pupil mobility, socio-economic status, and others.

Since 1969, many organizational structures in the province have reflected the recommendations contained in the publication Developing School Systems

(Greenfield, et al., OISE, 1970), recommendations based on assumptions of increasing growth in school systems and large districts. The time has come for a new look at organizations, investigations that will result in recommended patterns reflective of the current political, social and economic situation.

The matter of reducing central office numbers cannot be done according to a formula related to the decline in numbers of students and teachers. With one or two exceptions in the larger districts in our sample, respondents were firm in the notion that the reductions made thus far are about the limit. In small districts, especially in the north where distances are a factor, there is little possibility of allocating functions among other personnel without placing great burdens on administrative staff and without straining the ability of the staff to carry out its work effectively. *Reduction of central office staff must be considered by a school board in terms of functions to be carried out, and a position should be eliminated only if the board has developed a plan for the duties of an individual to be carried out by others in the system.* This is particularly appropriate for supervisory officers. For example, a board has a responsibility for system-wide evaluation, especially in relation to the new mandate for Ministry regional offices, and this responsibility is likely to be the function of a supervisory officer. In a small board, which has few consultants and perhaps two or three supervisory officers, the reduction of one position would probably imply the elimination of the evaluation function. It is our judgement that there is little leeway for supervisory officer reduction in boards with 15,000 students or fewer. Greater leeway may exist for the large jurisdictions in southern Ontario.

For larger boards, there are some alternatives that might make possible the reduction of the numbers of personnel at the central office, although

again such moves ought to be made according to some plan not directly tied to the declining pupil population or layoffs of teachers. Many large systems are organized according to a family of schools concept. At the head of each family is a supervisory officer, with appropriate numbers of support staff. As numbers decline, it is conceivable to combine two families into one, with a resulting reduction in personnel at the administrative level. This is the easy solution. *More complex is the notion of eliminating families of schools in a structural sense while retaining the educational advantages.* For example, one large system is considering dividing into two parts for administrative purposes, an east section and a west section. Each section would have eventually about 35,000 students, with accompanying administrative and support staff. Within each section, a semblance of the family notion would be retained, but the clusterings could be centered around cooperative efforts among school principals. That is, there would be no supervisory officer directly in charge, but the division would be organized according to school groupings, with a sub-organization of principals. *The notion is that the role of school principal would take on more of a system-wide managerial tone, with the implication that some in-school administrative functions would filter to assistant principals, heads, and teachers.*

Central office personnel in large systems include coordinators and consultants in a variety of areas. *Some jurisdictions are considering shifting these functions to the school level, assuming that an experienced and professional teaching staff can become more self sufficient in program matters.* Such a shift would permit reduction of central office consulting personnel. Curriculum and program development are not within the parameters of this report, strictly speaking. Nevertheless, we can conceive of these kinds of

reductions so long as the board makes provision for maintaining the flow of the educational program, for updating, and for systematic curriculum development. In a system of 50,000 students, for example, a certain amount of coordination is essential to preserve a sense of order. What is clear from our study, however, is that small boards, especially in the north, are hurting from recent reductions in Ministry consulting services. These boards have neither the personnel nor the resource base in the community to provide needed consulting services over wide geographical areas.

Quite apart from the question of the size of the central office staff is the question of what central office administrators do and ought to do. Some studies now ongoing in the province are attempting to examine what administrators do with the time and resources at their disposal. We await the results. From what we already know about what administrators do and from the results of our conversations relative to this study, we can identify some alternatives for boards in the matter of administrative functions. These alternatives bear a possible relationship to reduction of the administrative component, although they should be considered essentially as ways of improving the administration of schools.

A rather significant organizational shift has occurred in one large school board in the province. Since 1969 and the reorganization of school boards into larger units of administration, most systems have employed an administrative council form of governance at the central office level. While the precise powers of this group will vary from system to system, it is most often used to examine issues brought to it from other groups in the system, to develop policy stances for consideration by the board, and to formulate decisions on issues, even though the ultimate decision may be taken by the

chief executive officer or the board. The group meets quite often, usually once a week for a meeting of up to three hours.

The alternative strategy adopted by the board under discussion is to eliminate the administrative council as an ongoing top level decision-making group. Instead, problems or issues that ordinarily would have come to the council are assigned to one of the supervisory officers. He/she then forms an appropriate ad hoc committee to deal with the issue. Thus if the problem is one of finances, the business administrator would gather a small group to reach a decision or to take a position. If it is a community issue, another group would be formed, and so on.

The rationale for this, discussed in more detail in a previous chapter, is that decisions are the result of expert involvement rather than generalist involvement, the sense of putting off individual responsibility to the group is eliminated, and untold hours of expensive time are saved. On occasion the total supervisory officers' group is called together, but only to deal with a specific system-wide problem. Otherwise, the individual responsible will report to the director and the decision is taken or routed to the board. It is interesting to note that this board has reduced its supervisory officer complement by four positions in the past few years, although we cannot claim it is totally the result of this shift in administrative functioning.

Another strategy is to ensure that supervisory officers are not overly involved in detailed work that could be handled by less highly trained personnel. More than one board is considering a close examination of this problem with a view to reducing the almost unbearable time pressures on central office staff as government and community demands increase.

Declining enrolments suggest a lessening of mobility, a shrinkage of opportunities for advancement in the administrative hierarchy and a resulting loss of morale, movement, new thinking, and the like. *Popular notions about dealing with this involve short-term appointments for certain categories of officials at the central office.* An individual might be brought in for a year or two from a school for experience in an administrative capacity. While this strategy is a good one and should be used to an extent by every system, we are of the view that such mechanisms must be limited. We cannot envisage more than a few such positions available in even a large system. The problems of socialization, training, supervision, and general instability militate against extensive short-term appointments. It is certainly clear to us that the purpose of short-term exchanges should be to broaden the experience of existing administrators in a district and to provide opportunities for those with administrative potential to gain experience. We cannot see this strategy having great impact in any one system on the problem of surplus personnel.

In general, there are some strategies that will enable a reduction in central office staff and a more efficient use of available personnel. Boards should examine such possibilities, but should guard against automatically assuming that because the teaching force is shrinking the administrative force must shrink a corresponding amount. At the same time systems seem to be moving toward flatter organizations, with a shift in responsibility to the school level and a corresponding shift in the definition of the role of school principal.

Local Control, the Board of Education, and the Community

The issue of local control of education in Ontario is one of the central themes of educational history in the province. To the extent that there is local control at the community level, the local school board is the mechanism whereby such control is exercised and articulated, and every school jurisdiction in the province, with the exception of some jurisdictions in remote areas, has a board consisting of elected members from local communities. Members are elected for two years, and it is not uncommon for some trustees to be re-elected for several terms. School trustees generally represent particular parts of the district, although their responsibility once elected is for the total school program.

In comparison with other provinces and with most states in the United States, school boards are large in terms of numbers, often with twenty or more members on the larger boards. As a result, the planning and execution of school board business is complex, with a series of committees and sub-committees responsible for various aspects of system operation. Board meetings themselves are often quite formal, with extensive documentation of various issues, demands on administrators for reports and opinions, and long debates on issues.

Questions about the role of trustee in educational governance, the size of boards, whether trustees should be full time are long-standing ones. The issue of whether to have school boards at all is seldom raised, at least seriously, and we have not detected in recent years any responsible study that examines the whole basis of educational governance in the province, with any suggestions for alternative modes. Of course, other countries such as Australia and England have different patterns.

The advent of declining enrolments, especially in conjunction with the economic turndown, raises some fundamental questions. Here are two quotations from respondents in our study, representing polar positions on the basic nature of school governance:

> I think people care about local control. I don't believe they want to see schools in the hands of the province. This board, and most of the boards in this region, would very strongly resist any further loss of autonomy than we now have lost.

> One of the things I think we have to take a long look at is whether school boards as they are presently constituted are as viable as they once were.

The two statements are not necessarily antithetical, but the first suggests a continuation of the present system with policies and regulations designed to increase power at the local level. The second statement questions the status quo. In this section of the report we will present some specific issues raised during our study with supporting comment. The sorts of changes implied in our comments would require extensive discussions and action on the government level.

One of the problems raised in our interviews concerns the rather forbidding complexity of school operation from the trustee point of view. The sorts of background and knowledge required to deal with multi-million dollar budgets, negotiated contracts from employees, school closings, program development, staff development and a myriad of other elements of the school situation take time to develop. As one board chairperson stated:

> . . . the fact that school boards are elected for two years, and you just get people to have some kind of awareness and understanding of the whole operation, and then they either quit or they're not re-elected . . . some kind of consistent approach is needed . . . new trustees come in like lambs to slaughter.

One alternative is to make the job of trustee a full-time one, a proposal that has been debated for a long time. This would enable an individual to devote full energy to the job, to become totally involved, to develop deeper understandings of the nature of school governance. It is our view, however, that the arguments against the full-time trusteeship outweigh the advantages. In addition to the real possibility of creating another expensive level of administration, there is the sense that a move in this direction would cut off access to this important form of public service for a number of competent individuals who are otherwise gainfully employed. School boards are not legislative bodies but are more like boards of directors who ought to be concerned only with broad policy issues.

A more attractive possibility is to push for an extension of the term of trustee, perhaps four-year terms. A longer term would enable an individual trustee to become genuinely familiar with the complexities of the issues. An additional possibility in a related sense is to establish an apprenticeship aspect to the trusteeship. Individuals planning to run for office could be required to indicate their interest a year in advance, and during that year the board would run a kind of in-service training program, exposing potential trustees to the intricacies of the operation, to the issues, to the personalities within the system and external to it. This could be a valuable experience even for individuals unsuccessful in their bid for office.

It would be appropriate for school boards, perhaps through the provincial trustee associations, to discuss the possibility of decreasing the numbers of members on boards. A reduction in the number of trustees, of course, would require changes in legislation, but quite apart from this, there is nothing sacred about the size of the board, and there is

no evidence to suggest that a better job is done when there are fifteen trustees as opposed to eight or any other number. On the contrary, there is direct cost to the taxpayers for the board in terms of honoraria, provision of materials, expense money and, most important, administrative services. There is, of course, a strong argument in favor of the larger numbers in that various segments of the community may be better represented, and there is no suggestion that the current size of boards has been a detriment to the operation of the school system. *A useful exercise would be the development of a full position paper on this issue, including a cost analysis of what it actually requires to fund the board operation.*

A more radical proposal for the restructuring of the school board surfaced in several of our interviews. *The suggestion was to consider the formation of a broad-based board in the community responsible for all education-related services.* In addition to responsibility for elementary and secondary education, such a board would be accountable for libraries, parks and recreation, adult education services, and other education-related activities. The school board in its present form would disappear.

The notion is one of a "family of services." One of the attractive aspects of such an idea is that potential disruptive infighting among agencies seeking to ensure their own survival by "grabbing" greater and greater slices of the resource pie in the community would be lessened. School boards, for example, are seriously considering expansion of their adult education programs in the hopes of ensuring employment for teachers about to be declared redundant. Allocation of employees across agencies, in fact, could be greatly facilitated by amalgamating the responsibility for education-related activities in one body. Although such a system could contribute to the ability of the community to cope with problems of decline,

its real merit is in the possibility of the improvement of the delivery of educational services across a broad spectrum.

There are a number of problems. The long tradition of the separation of public education from other municipal activities is firmly entrenched. While it is a dying myth, there is a sense among educators and among laymen that education should not be tainted with any sense of "politics" in the narrow sense of the word. Further, the institution of such a system would require a period of study relating to such questions as the appropriate administrative structure, implications for tax collections and allocations, relations to the central government, new methods of setting priorities, the size of jurisdictions, and the like. Such a system would mean an even more fundamental change in the governing structure of education than did the reorganization into larger units in 1969.

One of the major issues that surfaced in our interviews across the province concerns the changing role of the school trustee in the community. The closing of schools, for example, requires extraordinary effort on the part of the trustees in the community in coping with an emotionally charged public. The decisions to be taken relative to teacher layoffs, squeezing of programs, school closings and related problems can only result in increased public exposure of trustees, increased pressures from a variety of conflicting interest groups, increased frustrations resulting from fears in the community that the quality of education available to children will diminish. We have found no definitive descriptions of what this new role for trustees will be, what skills are required to carry it out, what strategies will enable trustees to preserve judgement and sanity. One respondent said that "more

guts would be required." While we agree with this in the general sense, we are not sure what it means specifically.

Perhaps the most appropriate suggestion to make in a general sense, pending more specific study, is to urge boards to emphasize the old idea of the corporate nature of the board. Board members should act as a body, should avoid individual efforts in the community that make them vulnerable to attack. Responses to declining enrolments ought to come from total board action, and the strategies employed by individual board members in dealing with the community should be developed at the board level.

Some specific suggestions relative to this general problem area are discussed in the next section.

School Accommodation and Closure

One of the major problems in a declining enrolment situation facing trustees and administrators is the question of appropriate use of excess space. Related to this are strategies appropriate for closing schools. At first glance, it might appear that this problem is amenable to some sort of formula or set of formulae. When a school reaches a certain size, for example, the policy could mandate that it be closed. The results of our interviews, however, indicate that there are a number of factors involved in the accommodation question. The issue becomes so complex that it is difficult to generalize across the province, and sometimes variations within a single system are such that each accommodation situation needs to be considered as a discrete problem. Among the factors that need to be considered are the ethnic composition of the district, the unevenness of decline across the district, geography and sparse population, and mobility.

The most general point, therefore, about accommodation and closure is that flexible policies are needed as opposed to a single formula for either individual districts or regions or the entire province. There are some specific issues within the general area of accommodation and closure that need to be discussed.

One problem could be labelled "the landlord issue." If a school is closed, should the property be sold or leased, and if it is leased, what kinds of policies are appropriate, and what kind of legal implications are there? Are there alternative uses for the properties within the school program? At first, it is relatively easy. One school closes, and the building, with minor renovations, can be used for consultant offices, special programs, spill-over from the central office and the like. But when several buildings are closed, the board must consider a more systematic approach. Here are two comments by respondents emphasizing the need for careful thought:

> I think we have to be very innovative and sharp and do whatever is necessary to find alternative uses of this space for public or for private purposes . . . .
>
> I think the board should retain its facilities as far as possible because you project ahead [to] the next century and what can you predict? Once those facilities are gone, they are not replaceable.

Although most of our respondents favored leasing rather than selling excess property, our view is a cautious one. *We favor the recommendation of the Illinois State Commission on Declining Enrolments to the effect that leasing should be the choice if there is reason to believe that the facility might be needed in five or ten years for public educational purposes.*

If a decision is made to lease, there is the question of the kinds of tenants appropriate for the facilities and whether the board should engage

in profit-making activities with its properties. There are some legal problems in this area, and if boards are to engage in profit-making activities, then the regulations will have to be modified. *In general, it seems to us that boards, in cooperation with government authorities, ought to examine seriously the possibility of moving toward profit-making uses of surplus property.* If such policies make it possible to control tax rates to some extent, the public interest would be served. At the same time, in the public interest, properties should be utilized for legitimate purposes, preferably for purposes serving community needs. Perhaps a list of priority uses could be developed, with favorable rates available to educational organizations.

One of the strategies discussed in regard to surplus property is to have boards move into educational areas for which they have not been traditionally responsible. Expansion into adult education and higher education are examples. While these are alternatives popular with some educators and with teacher groups who see the solution to redundant personnel in this kind of expansion, we urge caution in this area. Expansion merely to ensure survival does not seem appropriate, especially when one may question the ability of a school board to administer certain activities and given the fact that other agencies may have legitimate interests. If a community should adopt one of the ideas discussed earlier in this report relative to the formation of a broad-based community council for education, this strategy would not be appropriate.

There has been considerable discussion of administrative arrangements within systems when excess space is available. "Twinning" is one such concept in which two small buildings would remain open but, instead of two principals, there would be one in charge of both buildings. There are many

variations. There could be a new name given to the new entity. Former names could be retained, and there would still be separate schools, but with one administration. Other kinds of strategies involve either closing off parts of certain buildings to save costs, or leasing parts of buildings to other organizations. Most of these ideas are worthy of consideration, but we have a strong recommendation in this regard. *Before twinning or any other organizational arrangement is adopted, there should be research and evaluation carried out by qualified agencies, probably external to the system.* It is not enough to armchair all the advantages and disadvantages. Some studies in this regard should be set up in the province, and these should be carefully monitored over a period of time in order to obtain hard data as to the real advantages and disadvantages. In one board in our study, for example, it was pointed out that combining the two high schools in the district into one would have a profound effect on inter-school activities. The district is in an isolated area, and the potential for contact with other high schools for sports events and other kinds of interaction is limited. A move to combine, therefore, would have considerable effect on what happens to students, and it might have some effects on student achievement. At this point, we simply do not know what these effects might be. This is not to argue against these kinds of combinations, but only to urge careful study of the possibilities and of the effects of action on the educational program as well as on the personnel in the district and the community.

The decision to close a school or even to combine schools has serious implications in the community, as pointed out in our section on local control, and it is necessary for the board and administration to proceed carefully in the process to minimize adverse political repercussions. The

educational effect, after all, is the important factor. Quite obviously, the decision to close a school should follow public meetings and hearings by the board, and there are some general principles to follow in this regard.

The decision to close a school may involve a number of relevant groups, including school board members, school personnel, citizens' committees, and outside consultants. The difficulty with the participatory model, thus far, is that the issues are generally so emotionally charged, and groups tend to take such firm stands either for or against board proposals that good decisions are practically impossible to achieve quickly and without disruption. The point is that the responsibility for school closures rests with the board. Boards should gather all relevant information and solicit opinions, but then should proceed to act with as little fanfare as possible. In this regard, the Ministry of Education has a responsibility to assist by providing information, and by developing policies and regulations and procedures making it possible for boards to close schools and dispose of property in systematic ways. If public hearings are held, they should be few in number, and the decision by the board should follow close on the hearings, possibly on the same night as the final hearing.

While we have argued strongly that alternative use of facilities and decisions about school closure are concerns that vary widely from district to district, there is at least one aspect of the situation that lends itself to province-wide action. *Our respondents indicated interest in the establishment of an ongoing resource centre on declining enrolments at the provincial level.* Such a centre would maintain a computerized data base to inventory vacant classrooms in the province, update population projections, catalogue various policies developed around the province to deal with decline, and most importantly, it could provide expert help in a number of areas. For example,

as indicated in our previous points, there are legal implications and problems related to school closings, leasing, and other alternatives. A school board, especially a small school board, could benefit from ready access to expert help on these issues.

Personnel and Program

The impact of declining enrolments on personnel (below the administrative level) and program is the subject of major study by other groups working for the Commission on Declining Enrolments. We shall touch only briefly on some points that are of particular concern at the administrative level.

Most of our respondents seem familiar with the potential problems with personnel associated with declining enrolments. A number of strategies have been identified as worthy of consideration to deal with the problem, although it is not clear to us what strategy could serve to ensure the employment of teachers as teachers in situations where the severity of decline poses questions of massive "reductions in force." Boards and central administration, however, should consider policies encouraging early retirement, long-term leaves of absence, exchanges, and the like. These are stop-gap measures at best, good only for a limited problem and for a short term. They also tend to be costly.

One strategy that should be adopted by every board is to establish an ongoing staffing study team, perhaps in cooperation with some central agency such as described in the previous section. Information for all categories of staff is needed relative to retirement profiles, training profiles, interests, potential for advancement, salary projections, future staffing needs.

Most educators seem interested in possibilities of retraining and of moving teachers from one area to another where possible, without undue restraints imposed by regulations. *At the provincial level, therefore, there is a need to reconsider many of the certification practices with a view to increasing the possibility of movement from one area of certification to another, so long as the quality of the teaching can be maintained.* As one respondent said:

> We'd like to be in a position where you have say half a dozen or a dozen or maybe even thirty teachers who could teach any number of subjects so that even though there are fewer teachers we have the option to keep up the number of courses that we're going to offer.

There is some limit to this, of course. We are familiar with the problem in districts with a large French-language program. Teachers with English-speaking backgrounds cannot easily retrain or equip themselves to move into bilingual situations, even though there is probably more potential for teacher employment in bilingual situations. There are other similar examples, especially at the secondary-school level. On the other hand, one could imagine providing easier mobility between elementary and secondary schools with a minimum of retraining. And there are many subject areas where mobility could be encouraged if the regulations permitted it.

If layoffs are required, and they certainly will be in many districts, boards must consider the order of layoff. We can imagine that every brief submitted to the Commission on Declining Enrolments deals with this question, and our research does not reveal any magic solution to the problem, or any magic formula. While the criterion of competence is attractive to many, the incidence of school systems utilizing other than a seniority base for layoffs is rare. We see some signs, however, of boards looking at policies that combine seniority with some sort of merit feature, and we

encourage these moves. The most likely path at the moment, however, is the seniority one, last in, first out.

We are unable to take a firm stand on this issue. The best that can be done is to urge boards to develop a reduction policy that incorporates means to retain the more competent staff and to create a list of the order of layoff so that individuals will know in advance what will happen to them. We did not find much interest among trustees and central administrators in policies that would maintain teachers on staff even if there were no jobs for them. There are some larger social issues involved in such a policy, including the notion that a large number of teachers on layoff would strain the social welfare budget anyway, and perhaps the school board should continue support. In the event that decisions are taken locally or provincially to maintain teachers on staff when the jobs disappear, there is a problem as to what to do with them. Considerable planning must be done to avoid problems being faced by large school boards in Quebec this year where teachers are being maintained. The morale problem and the issue of waste of human talents is considerable when a large number of individuals are being paid not to work.

We shall deal only briefly with questions of program. The natural tendency in a period of decline is to expand program into new areas in order to provide employment for surplus staff. Thus there are proposals to increase special education opportunities, to meet the special needs of ethnic groups, to expand the idea of junior kindergarten, to provide daycare. One cannot question the merit of these individual efforts, although the cost factor has considerable implications for school districts. The issue of whether education in Ontario should move toward a cradle to the grave

involvement with communities is related to the question of social priorities. If education is highly valued by the citizens, then the expansion of educational opportunities will proceed and there will be a basic reallocation of resources away from other services to education. Such a commitment, however, requires long debate and government-level policies in order to succeed. At the local board level, therefore, expansion into other areas should be looked at most carefully, and probably boards should not move too far without firm support from the government. The idea of moving rapidly into adult education, for example, in order to preserve jobs smacks of expediency.

Administrative Skills and Training

The effects of declining enrolments on central office administrative organization and staffing are discussed in Chapter III. Notable among these effects are the reduction of supervisory officer positions, the realignment of administrative functions into larger portfolios and, in some school systems, a shift of supervisory functions from the central level to the school level. The discussion also highlights various strategies that systems in the study sample have shaped to alleviate the resulting heavy workload at the central level and, at the same time, to provide administrative opportunities for school personnel on a short-term, contractual basis.

With the exception of the two largest systems, the school boards studied do not plan any further reduction in supervisory officer force. Arguments are provided for the necessity to hold the line; they range from the heavier workload as a result of positions lost, through increased accounting and

reporting demands from the Ministry and other governmental agencies, to the heating up of the political arena, especially in the domain of collective bargaining with various categories of staff.

In addition to examining the effects of declining enrolments on administrative structure and staffing, the research team was interested in obtaining perceptions -- from school trustees, directors, and supervisory officers -- of any special skills that administrators need during this period of decline for which experience and training have not prepared them. Related questions of training, qualification, and certification of supervisory officers were posed.

One of the directors alluded to what might be considered the overarching skill in this period of decline.

> Adaptation to decline is going to be a very important skill in the years ahead. If we are only adapted to growth, then we are likely to make a tragic mess of decline. There is a strong case to be made for the argument that decline requires a greater skill, a better judgement, a stronger sense of community, and a higher order of leadership than growth does.

In an attempt to examine the skills and strategies needed by administrators in adapting to decline, we developed a major paper for a regional series of conferences on the theme "The Creative Management of Retrenchment," sponsored by The Ontario School Trustees' Council. Three separate areas of concern were identified that emphasized the need for a new accommodation among competing values and objectives in the areas of *planning*, *personnel*, and *participation and politics*.

The interviews we conducted for the current study have served to validate those three areas of concern, in which both trustee and administrator respondents cited a need for skill development in this particular period. We received frequent references to the need for more systematic, long-range

planning in educational systems. Inevitably, discussion of long-range planning focused on the whole area of resource aggregation and resource allocation. One respondent commented:

> For a long time we were able to recoup many of our planning bungles with the kind of massive growth we had. In planning a decline, I don't think we're going to have that margin for error. Administrators will need to have a fuller understanding of more sophisticated management systems. The refinement of management information systems and forecasting systems will be absolutely essential in a period of decline. The consequence of mistakes are less easily remedied than they were in a period of expansion.

Another respondent in commenting on needed skills: "I'd say the first one is a planning skill. I think supervisory officers generally are woefully weak in that area." He made it clear that he was not speaking of only financial planning; he elaborated on his concept of planning to include the skill to identify needs and match the resources, be those needs in the area of school organization, program, curriculum organization, and the like. From a business administration point of view, another respondent observed:

> Some of the skills that we really haven't used too much that we should really have at the present time are in the area of planning. For instance, we really haven't had to do that much planning in an increasing enrolment situation. Now we're getting to the other point where planning is more important now.

We observed in our paper that the management of personnel within the system is at once the most immediate and potentially the most volatile problem associated with declining enrolments. We discussed the management of personnel in terms of morale and motivation and the different levels of skills required in a period of contracting the professional teaching force.

One interviewee in the current study observed:

> There is a morale problem among those teachers who have been hired in the last few years who are talented and will not have the promotional possibilities that have existed before. Some type of provision will have to be made for all staff to get a type of recognition that you get, certainly, for work in the classroom, but beyond that the type of recognition that you can get professionally for expertise in certain areas.

The respondent went on to explain that, while administrators have always required good skills in the human relations area, in today's uncertain educational environment they need to develop these skills to a higher level.

In the third area -- participation and politics -- a number of our respondents alluded to the predominate value on governance in our society today; namely, representativeness, with the resulting demands for participation in policy making and decision making and the inevitable politicization of education in terms of competing values and objectives for education. One trustee interviewee, in responding to the question about special skills administrators need during this current period of decline, offered the following observations:

> Speaking as a politician, and after this last hour and a half I have just been through as a member of the community, I would say that an administrator needs a lot of ability to deal with irate community people. I don't know how they get that, but their academic training certainly does not prepare them for that. In this period of retrenchment, there is a lot of community unrest, community misunderstanding, and community protectionism that comes to their school. I just spent the last hour with a lawyer who is a community member but also has been retained by his own community to fight the board every step of the way, if necessary, if we threaten to do anything to their school.

A number of our respondents placed a great deal of emphasis on the need now for knowledge and skill in legal matters, collective negotiations, financial problems, and community relations.

The foregoing brief discussion on skills that administrators require in a period of declining enrolment illustrates a growing consensus among scholars and practitioners alike on the image of an educational leader as one skilled in the areas of planning, personnel, participation and politics. We have found this emphasis running through the literature on leadership in declining systems. One writer, in summarizing recent commentaries on educational administration, emphasizes the importance of four leadership talents: the talent to deal effectively with people, the talent to manage conflict, the talent to mediate between the organization and the broader society, and the talent to manage time. Another writer in this area conceptualizes administration as leadership, as resource allocation, and as mediation of competing political demands. The common characterization of all these conceptions is the educational leader as a planner, a resource allocator, a motivator of personnel, and a mediator of conflicting attitudes, points of view, and postures. While this is a heroic conception, we feel that it is valuable in serving to identify where our attention must be directed in order, not only to cope, but to influence positively the direction and quality of public education in Ontario.

This brings us to a consideration of training programs for administrators. In the First Interim Report of The Commission on Declining School Enrolments in Ontario, we discussed administrative certification and training as it has developed over the years in Ontario. While we do not intend to rehearse that discussion here, we should like to make some general comments on administrative training and certification based on data collected for this study, and then to support the concept of a larger-scale study in the whole area of the selection, training, certification, and professional development of supervisory officers.

On the basis of the data collected from our eleven sample boards, it appears that the incumbent administrators will bear the burden of directing their systems' responses to decline over approximately the next decade. Recognizing that the mean age to retirement of supervisory officers in our sample is nine years, we see a strong need for effective in-service programs to develop the knowledge and skills in the areas discussed earlier. A number of our respondents indicated that they preferred in-service experiences that build upon their existing skills and that have a practical orientation, both in content and methodology. While the respondents from the smaller systems felt that they did not have the resources to conduct such in-service activities, some of the larger systems felt that a great deal of in-service education could be conducted among their own cadre of administrators. In one board, an example was given of an in-house program to familiarize all central-level administrators with the budget process. Most of our respondents indicated that they felt the Ministry of Education had a responsibility for providing financial assistance to school boards for in-service training of supervisory officers.

In terms of training programs for potential administrators, there is a growing consensus, both in the literature and among practitioners, that the purpose of such programs is to prepare administrators who can act when confronted with novel problems or situations. This conception suggests that a training program should include both intellectual and clinical experiences. It also calls for a higher level of cooperation and collaboration between university and school system personnel in developing programs that can meet both objectives. An important component of such a program would be an activity of an integrative nature in which the candidate puts together all

aspects of his program, examining what he had learned from research and theory and matching that with his clinical experiences.

We did not receive many observations on the current certification process for supervisory officers. While our respondents felt that, for the most part, there is a large pool of certificated academic supervisory officers, the prospects of qualified recruits for business supervisory officers are bleak. With only one exception, our respondents indicated that this was a critical area for the Ministry to examine in terms of its existing regulations.

The other major area of comment in connection with certification was that of the lack of any formative experiences leading to the examinations for the certificate. Most of the respondents felt that, although there had been many local efforts in terms of study groups, there should be a coordinated approach to the process. The most frequently suggested mode was some form of administrative internship.

We return to our earlier comment that our data base from this study is too narrow to form specific recommendations concerning the training and certification of central office administrators. We have offered comments of a general nature to provide some notion of the concerns and issues in this area. We follow these general comments with *a strong recommendation that a major study be undertaken on the supervisory officer*. At the time of writing this report, the Ontario Association of Education Administrative Officials, through an advisory committee that is widely representative of all segments of the educational community, is designing a major study whose prime objective is the development of recommendations to the Ministry of Education relating to qualifications, candidature, pretraining, the examination process and certification, and in-service training of supervisory officers.

From the data we have collected through our limited sample of school systems, we endorse the need for such a study and support the nature and scope of the study design. We would further recommend that the Ministry of Education provide financial assistance for such a study.

The Provincial Government and the Ministry

The tradition of government influence in education is strong in Ontario and in the other provinces of Canada, stronger than it is in the United States, for example. As a result, the statutes, regulations, and financial supports from the government are extremely important to local school districts, and there is a special responsibility for the government and its bureaucracies to examine statutes and regulations in the light of declining enrolments. Following are some areas identified in our study that need attention from the government.

Support for Minimal Programs

With declining enrolments and the resulting squeeze on comprehensive educational programs, there is a need for the government to provide support so that every jurisdiction in the province can maintain a minimal educational program. The whole concept of equality of educational opportunity is called into question in a period of severe retrenchment, especially in small districts.

Long-Range Financial Planning

The government and the Ministry need to engage in long-range financial planning so that local boards can have a sense of continuity. Further, there

should be developed common forms and procedures for financial planning at the local level so that comparisons can be made and local policies can be developed in line with provincial projections for support. It has sometimes been the case that government incentives have been provided over the short term for new programs, but then this support has been withdrawn, leaving local jurisdictions in an untenable position financially. Long-range planning would alleviate this problem.

In addition, and we do not dwell on this because it is discussed in a number of other sections of the Jackson Commission report, consideration should be given to a major revision of the grant structure. Many of our respondents were of the opinion that the use of per-pupil costs as a basis for support, no matter how it is tinkered with to reflect current conditions, has outlived its utility. We ought to look seriously at some alternatives in this regard.

Modification of Facilities

We heard a number of comments about the difficulty of responding to needs for building modification in relation to government regulations on construction. In one board, a modest renovation was proposed to change existing facilities to accommodate a new group of students. The delays and regulations were such that it was virtually impossible to gain approval, and the danger is that the board may be forced to expend much more money to get the job done.

School District Boundaries

The current boundaries for school districts have been in place since 1969. These boundaries, essentially along county lines, are not sacred.

Consideration should be given to combining some jurisdictions into larger units, especially where decline is making some systems not viable as separate units. *We suggest that there should be a study at the provincial level of appropriate school district boundaries with suggestions for change where shifting populations are causing major problems.* In relation to this, consideration should also be given to extensive sharing of facilities. Encouragement should be given to having pupils with special needs and interests attend schools in other jurisdictions that might have strong programs in particular areas. In this way, variety in program offerings could be maintained.

Fixed Costs

The most dramatic and widespread negative effect of current government policies on support is related to fixed costs. Since the basic policy is to provide supports according to the number of pupils, the effect of a dramatic decline in students in any one year is severe, especially since some costs do not decline according to the number of students. Losing 100 students from a secondary school results in loss of grant, but probably does not decrease the heating bill, and probably has no effect on the teaching staff if, as is likely, the decline is random across the school. The loss of one student out of each of 100 classes does not permit a reduction in the teaching force. There needs to be some leeway permitted, perhaps some other basis for funding so that there is a period of adjustment.

Provincial-Local Relationships

There is also a need for an improvement of relationships between the Ministry of Education and central office administrators and trustees. One official comments: "There has been a void in this province in recent years in communication. I need information. I need cooperation. We need support."

There was a sense among the respondents that administration is bearing the brunt of the impact of declining enrolments, from the public and from professional staff, but is not receiving from the Ministry support in the form of frequent consultation or an understanding of the need to revise certain regulations in the light of decline. There needs to be direct and frequent communication between the Ministry and directors of education, and local districts need to feel that Ministry initiatives are in response to the needs expressed by those in the local districts responsible for carrying out the programs.

In this regard, we question the recent move by the government to move the regional offices of the Ministry into an evaluation mode. In certain small districts in the north, for example, the withdrawal of the consulting services poses a severe handicap because the small boards cannot provide these services themselves. They are too small, and suffer from a poor tax base. Further, the move to an evaluation function is likely to impose even greater burdens on central offices of local boards. They will be required to submit to periodic evaluations both from the central Ministry and from the regional offices with ever increasing amounts of information required. At the least, an examination should be made of the kinds of evaluations being carried out by Ministry personnel, the ability of Ministry personnel to carry them out, the use to which the results will be put, and the need of local districts for

this kind of evaluation. There is no doubt that Ministry personnel in the regions are responding to their new mandate as well as they can. But they must train themselves in these new tasks, and it is not clear as to exactly what is expected or what kinds of changes are anticipated in schools as a result of these efforts.

Our analysis of the rather frequent and strong critical comments toward the Ministry and toward the government from our respondents is that the response is more than just the normal seeking for a visible and vulnerable scapegoat. Genuine and serious concerns were voiced.

There is a sense that the Ministry of Education needs to assume greater public relations responsibility for the criticisms currently levelled at local jurisdictions, especially on issues related to decline. There is a perception, strongly held by most respondents, that government policies are handed down, but the accountability for them is focused on local trustees and administrators who are powerless to all intents and purposes to do anything.

In essence, we sensed a need among educators at the local level for the Ministry and for the government to assume leadership in education. There is a new image needed for education, an image that goes beyond responding to problems of declining enrolments, an image that speaks to the social realities of Ontario and to the needs of its citizens and its young people.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The Commission on Declining School Enrolments in Ontario

Study on Administrative Structure and Staffing

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

The interview consists of five basic components. To varying degrees, these components involve three types of questions. They range from highly structured inquiry to probing that suggests an open-ended response.

In the first instance, the interview is designed to elicit information that will yield a detailed profile of the school board and its organization. Secondly, the interview will probe areas in which declining enrolments are anticipated to create serious problems for school board operation. Finally, relatively unstructured questions are designed to encourage respondents to volunteer crucial information and insight that escape attention in the formal aspects of the interview.

The five components of the interview schedule reflect, substantially, a progression from structured to unstructured inquiry. However, respondents are encouraged to suggest elaboration on their formal responses and to specify structured questions that should be inserted.

Study Team

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COMPONENT I

Description of the School Board and Its Organization

Response to questions in this section is facilitated if the interview is focused on such documents as maps, plans, organization charts, information brochures, etc. It would be appreciated if we could be provided with copies of the above materials.

A. Geography. The following details are requested for insertion on a map of the area falling within the school board's jurisdiction.

Elementary Schools

1. _____ Number of elementary schools (location on map). A listing of enrolments for each school, if available.

2. _____ Average elementary school enrolment across the system.

3. _____ Enrolment level in elementary schools below which closing would be indicated.

4. _____ Number of elementary schools where present enrolment (when considered in isolation from other factors) would suggest the need to close the facility (location on map).

5. _____ Number of elementary schools where projected enrolment (when considered in isolation from other factors) would suggest the need to close the facility (location on map).

6. _____ Number of areas (indicate on map) where school board currently experiences pressure to open a new elementary school.

7. _____ Number of areas (indicate on map) where school board anticipates pressure to open a new elementary school.

Secondary Schools

8. _____ Number of secondary schools (location on map). A listing of enrolments for each school, if available.

9. _____ Average secondary school enrolment across the system.

10. _____ Enrolment level in secondary schools below which closing would be indicated.

11. _____ Number of secondary schools where present enrolment (when considered in isolation from other factors) would suggest the need to close the facility (location on map).

12. _____ Number of secondary schools where projected enrolment (when considered in isolation from other factors) would suggest the need to close the facility (location on map).

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Secondary Schools (continued)

13. _____ Number of areas (indicate on map) where school board currently experiences pressure to open a new secondary school

14. _____ Number of areas (indicate on map) where school board anticipates pressure to open a new secondary school

.....

15. _____ Number of postsecondary education institutions in the locality (indicate location and type on map).

16. _____ Number of board administration buildings (offices, maintenance, transportation, etc.--identify on map).

17. _____ Number of distinct non-Anglophone ethnic or linguistic groups that are identifiable with a particular neighborhood and which require that the school board supply special learning services (indicate location and type on map).

18. _____ Number of special learning facilities (e.g., vocational education, education of the deaf, school for the trainable retarded, etc.--identify on map).

19. _____ Number of major school bus routes.

20. _____ Number of students from neighboring school boards for whom education is provided in this board's schools (indicate the source of this inflow on map).

21. _____ Number of students whose residence is in this jurisdiction but who are educated in schools operated by neighboring boards (indicate route of this outflow).

22. _____ Number of school facilities that are operated in conjunction with RCSS Board (where respondent is from public board) or with public school board (where respondent is from RCSS Board). (Locate on map.)

23. _____ Number of school facilities that have been proposed for the type of use indicated in the previous question, but have not been approved for joint use (locate on map).

24. _____ Total geographical area under the school board's jurisdiction.

..... 4

B. The Formal Organization. The purpose of the following questions is to secure information that will contribute to the construction of an organization chart that is comprehensive and detailed. The interviewers are interested in securing documents that contain elaboration on the question responses (e.g., an organization chart, position descriptions, performance review procedures, standard operating procedure manual, etc.).

Positions Requiring Supervisory Officer's Certificate

25. How many positions exist in the formal organization structure that require incumbents to hold the supervisory officer's certificate?

26. Identify the title of each position.

27. Outline the formal responsibilities attached to each position.

28. What are the chain-of-command relationships between these positions? (Outline in diagram form for convenience.)

29. What committee structure is employed at the administration level?

30. List any administration committees that have school trustees as participants.

31. What committee structure is employed by the school board in the execution of its business?

    a) Identify standing committees.
    b) Identify currently-operating ad hoc committees.
    c) Identify statutory committees (e.g., F.L.A.C.).
    d) Others (e.g., task forces).

32. What formal responsibilities are assigned to supervisory officers for participation at regular school board meetings?

33. What is the frequency of these meetings?

34. What formal responsibilities are assigned to supervisory officers for participation at school board committee meetings?

35. What is the frequency with which the committees meet?

Positions Not Requiring Supervisory Officer's Certificate

36. What other professional staff are located at the central office or other administrative offices maintained by the board?

37. What support staff are located at the central office or other administrative offices maintained by the school board?

38. For each position listed in response to the previous two questions, indicate the chain-of-command relationships within the general formal organization and duties.

COMPONENT II

Demographic Information

Responses to the following question will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. They are of considerable importance to the study insofar as they yield insight on reorganizational problems that confront school boards as enrolments decline. It is for this purpose alone that the responses will be used.

39. For each incumbent of a position in the formal organization chart who has possession of a supervisory officer's certificate as a prerequisite, indicate (personal identity is not required):

    a) age;
    b) professional qualifications (degrees, certificates, etc.);
    c) total experience in education;
    d) total experience in education with this board;
    e) total experience as supervisory officer;
    f) total experience as supervisory officer with this board; and
    g) retirement profile (indicate years required to meet "the 90 factor").

Revisions to Supervisory Officer Complement

40. What changes have been made in the size of the supervisory officer complement since the board initially experienced decline in its total student population?

41. Why was each of these changes in the size of complement undertaken?

42. What adjustment in the size of the supervisory complement do you anticipate within the next five years?

43. On what grounds do you predicate this expectation?

44. What problems do you anticipate will stem from the initiative to adjust the supervisory officer complement size?

45. In the event that the anticipated initiative to adjust the size of the supervisory officer complement is completed, what do you expect will be the consequences for effective management of the school system?

Revisions to Formal Organization Structure

46. What revisions have been made to the formal organization structure since the board initially experienced decline in its total student population?

47. Why was each of these revisions initiated?

Revisions to Formal Organization Structure (continued)

48. What revisions do you anticipate will be made to the formal organization structure within the next five years?

49. On what grounds do you predicate this expectation?

50. What problems do you anticipate will stem from the initiative to revise the formal organization structure?

51. In the event that the anticipated revision to the formal organization structure is implemented, what do you expect will be the consequences for effective management of the school system?

Educational Program Organization

52. Outline the educational program organization that is operating in the board's schools (e.g., K-6, 7-8, K-8, 9-13, other).

53. How many elementary schools, teachers and students are involved with each of the following French language programs:

    a) core;
    b) extended; and
    c) immersion?

54. How many French language high schools are operated by the school board? How many teachers involved? How many students involved?

55. How many Bilingual (English/French) high schools are operated by the school board? How many teachers (English/French) involved? How many students (English/French) involved?

COMPONENT III

Board Policies

56. The following are areas in which declining enrolments presumably have an impact. For each topic indicate on a scale from 1 to 9 ("little impact" to "severe impact") the severity with which your board has experienced the effects of declining enrolments.

	Little Impact				"Problem Range" →				Severe Impact
School Closing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Transportation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Formal Organization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Supervisory Officer Complement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Other Professional Staff Complement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Support Staff Complement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Teacher Redundancy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
School Principal Redundancy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
School Principal Transfers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
School Principal Promotions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
General Program Organization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
French Language Programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Heritage Language Programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Special Education Programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Continuing Education Programs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Other Special Services (specify)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

57. For each item listed in the previous question, indicate those for which a current school board policy and administrative regulations and/or guidelines exist.

58. For the purposes of this question, a "problem area" is defined to exist if it received a rating of either 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9 in question #56.

    Where a "problem area" exists, evaluate board policy and administrative regulations and/or guidelines as either:

    a) non-existent;
    b) inadequate; or
    c) adequate.

59. Using the items identified in question #56 indicate those for which policy has been created or revised as a consequence of situations created by declining enrolments.

60. Using the items identified in question #56 indicate those for which new policy is needed, or current policy needs to be revised, in view of the declining enrolment prospects of the next five years.

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61. Explain the extent of the current (and impending) commitment of the school board to programs stemming from the Ministry of Education's recently announced Heritage Language Program. (Number of staff and students; budget)

62. Briefly outline the school board's current (and impending) commitment to special education programs. (Number of staff and students; budget)

63. Briefly outline the school board's current (and impending) commitment to continuing education programs. (Number of staff and students; budget)

64. What rates of decline in student enrolment has the board experienced in each of the past five years in:

    a) elementary schools;
    b) secondary schools;
    c) schools for the trainable retarded; and
    d) all schools (overall rates of decline)?

65. What rates of decline does the board anticipate in each of the next five years in:

    a) elementary schools;
    b) secondary schools;
    c) schools for the trainable retarded; and
    d) all schools (overall rates of decline)?

66. To what extent has the board experienced increasing enrolments in particular localities while the overall level of enrolments has declined?

67. Outline any special challenges posed for the effective organization of the school system by such factors as:

    a) rapid student turnover (as a consequence of population mobility);
    b) unique occupational patterns in the community;
    c) special socioeconomic factors in the community;
    d) dispersal of student population across broad geographic area; or
    e) other factors.

68. To what extent do clauses in collective agreements with the affiliates of the teachers' federations impinge on administrative discretion with respect to the management of problems stemming from declining enrolments?

69. To what extent has contact with the teachers' federations in respect of such matters as collective bargaining and policy development implied a counterproductive relationship that may militate against cooperation with the school board's initiatives to cope with problems arising from declining enrolments?

70. Describe current procedures that may be in effect for performance review of administrative staff. To what extent is such a review related to:

    a) salary determination; and
    b) dismissal?

71. Outline the salient features of redundancy policy that the board may have endorsed for the following categories of staff:

    a) teachers;
    b) principals and vice-principals;
    c) supervisory officers;
    d) other professional staff;
    e) support staff; and
    f) other (specify).

COMPONENT IV

Administrative Effects--Trustee/Administrator Perceptions

72. What special skills do you believe administrators need during this period of declining enrolments for which experience and training have not prepared them?

73. What professional development strategies are now required to upgrade the calibre of administrative performance in the face of contemporary challenges?

74. What obstacles currently hinder the professional growth of administrators employed by this school board?

75. What notable successes have been enjoyed with respect to initiatives undertaken in recent years to upgrade the professional effectiveness of supervisory officers?

76. What initiatives in the area of development of supervisory officer professional effectiveness have been unsuccessful?

77. To what extent do existing regulations governing supervisory officer certification ensure a supply of effective central office administrators?

78. Does the board specify any qualifications additional to those implied by the existing certification requirements?

COMPONENT V

Board Needs

79. Which factors are paramount in hindering the local school board from successfully coping with problems associated with declining enrolments?

80. In the immediate future what kind of external assistance is most pressing for school boards?

81. Over the long term, what fundamental changes will be necessary for this school board to operate as a viable unit for the local administration of education?